AN URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CANAL ISTANBUL PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

AN URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CANAL ISTANBUL PROJECT

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The main purpose of this thesis is to analyze the planned Canal Istanbul Project from the perspective of Marxist urban political ecology by examining it around the theme of the reproduction of urban life. The reproduction and reproduction of urban life are used in the research in two different but interrelated contexts. While the first context refers to the multifaceted process by which labor and capital produce themselves as social classes in the urban environment, the second context, inspired by David Harvey's "right to the city" discussions, is used to express the reproduction of urban life in terms of the class-based inequalities that the urbanization process relies on and reproduces. In the research, the definition of the city is taken as a process within socio-environmental metabolisms inspired by Swyngedouw, and it is tried to understand how the planned project will prevent the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul. Another attempt to make sense of the project is made through the political struggles that took place during the planning phase of the project. Here, the opinions and reports of experts and civic organizations are included.

Keywords: Marxist Urban Political Ecology, Urban Metabolism, Accumulation by Dispossession, Spatial Fix, The Right to the City

ÖZ

KANAL İSTANBUL PROJESİ'NİN KENTSEL POLİTİK EKOLOJİK ANALİZİ

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Bu tezin ana amacı, planlanan Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimi teması etrafında incelenerek Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifinden analizini yapmaktır. Kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimi ve yeniden üretimi araştırmada iki farklı ama birbirleriyle ilişkili bir bağlamda kullanılmıştır. Birinci bağlam emeğin ve sermayenin kentsel çevrede kendilerini toplumsal sınıflar olarak ürettikleri çok yönlü süreci ifade ediyorken, ikinci bağlam ise David Harvey'in "kent hakkı" tartışmalarından esinlenerek kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimini kentleşme sürecinin dayandığı ve yeniden ürettiği sınıf temelli eşitsizlikleri ifade etmek için kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada kent tanımı, Erik Swyngedouw'dan ilham alınarak sosyo-çevresel metabolizmalar içinde bir süreç olarak ele alınmış olup, planlanan projenin İstanbul'un kentsel yaşamının yeniden üretimini nasıl engelleyeceği anlaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bir diğer anlamlandırma çabası ise projenin planlama aşamasında dönen politik mücadeleler üzerinedir. Burada, uzman ve sivil organizasyonların görüşlerine, hazırlamış oldukları raporlara yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marksist Kentsel Politik Ekoloji, Kentsel Metabolizma, Mülksüzleştirme Yoluyla Birikim, Mekansal Çözüm, Kent Hakkı

To Kerem, Pınar, and Sarp

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MHA	Mass Housing Administration
NGO	Non - Governmental Organization
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
UCTEA	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
CEE	Chamber of Environmental Engineers
UPE	Urban Political Ecology
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Istanbul is under serious amounts of pressure in terms of physical, ecological, and social spheres due to the mega-projects imposed upon it. These projects are the 3rd Bridge project, the Istanbul Airport Project, and the Canal Istanbul project, which is the object of study in this thesis. The Canal Istanbul Project is worth studying as the social, economic and ecological implications are enormous, even at the planning stage.

This thesis will focus on this planning process, and the politics revolving around it, without going in much detail in its potential implementation process. Many argued that even just due to its huge financialization burden, it may likely not be possible to implement the project but for the purposes of this thesis, this is beside the point. Based on some NGO reports, scientific reports and some public discussions mainly took place in various media platforms this thesis mainly interrogates the political economic implications of the Canal Istanbul Project. The power mechanisms and struggles behind the planning process of the project are also important issues that deserve a focus in this thesis.

As I will shortly discuss, an urban political ecological analysis, a Marxist-inspired one at that, will help to identify the unequal power mechanisms that would impact the already existing urban inequalities in Istanbul and how the reproduction of urban life would be hindered. Therefore, one of the important aims of this thesis is to situate the case of the Canal Istanbul Project into the discussions revolving around the Marxist-inspired urban political ecology framework. This will hopefully lay bare not only the political economic problems attached to the project but, arguably more importantly, the political ecology of Istanbul's contemporary urbanization and the problems that flow from its conundrums.

1.1. The Aim of the Research and the Research Questions

The research aims to show how the project may give way to problematic processes that would jeopardize the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul. Therefore, the research consists of a series of research questions. To begin with, I ask: what are some of the ways in which the Canal Istanbul Project may restrict and hinder the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul, if it is to be built?

The production and reproduction of urban life is the term I use at two distinct but interrelated meanings. At the largest level of abstraction I use it to highlight the multifaceted process, whereby both labor and the capital reproduce themselves as social classes in the urban environment to enable the contemporary capitalist urban life, which inevitably have political ecological repercussions. Just to give one obvious example, a potential water shortage that might be caused by the Canal Istanbul Project—as its plan involves the annulment of two of the water reservoirs of İstanbul—would have serious negative repercussions on both laboring and the capitalist classes to reproduce themselves and hence, the urban life. This will be an important focal point throughout the thesis.

But I use the production and reproduction of urban life also more specifically to demarcate the class-based inequalities that the process of urbanization rests on and it further reproduces. I am borrowing the term from David Harvey's 2008 "The Right to the City" article in which, he, himself inspired by Henri Lefebvre's discussion on the right to the city in *The Writings on Cities* (1996) proposed that it is the working classes that rely on the use value of the city and of urban space. It is the labor of the working classes that reproduces the urban life, the value of which is often expropriated by the capitalist class, especially by capturing the exchange values produced in this process in the city. The production and reproduction of urban life in this second meaning clearly rests upon a class-based understanding. In this current context of this thesis, I will try to shed a sociological light on the ways in which the Project may jeopardize and hinder the production and reproduction of urban life in Istanbul, i.e., the ability of the labor to reproduce itself under the socio-ecological conditions, distressed by the implementation of the Canal Istanbul Project.

Following this main research question of what are some of the ways in which the Project may hinder the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul, I further ask: How can we sociologically make sense of the political struggle revolving around the planning of the Canal Istanbul Project. What are the main actors, and what political economic agendas they might have? In this context what are some of the ways in which the scientific community, various experts such as occupational groups like chambers, and non-governmental organizations approaching the issue? What are their positions and stakes in the issue? Last but not least, what does even the sheer fact that such a gigantic project—that would have irreversible political ecological effects, such as the saltiness levels of Black Sea, the Marmara Sea and the Mediterranean—could be proposed and planned by a government tell us about the political composition of the Turkish Republic?

This research is significant in terms of adding an analysis from the Marxist-inspired urban political ecology perspective of the Canal Istanbul Project to the literature. Previous studies focused on economic, ecological, technical, political, and geopolitical aspects, as I will discuss in the literature review section. As I will go into the details shortly, the Marxist political ecology came into light from the discussions of Neil Smith, David Harvey, Eric Swyngedouw, Nick Heynen and many others in order to fill the gap they identified between an ecological and environmental analysis of the political economic processes that lacked the political economic analyses, and the urban political economic analyses that lacked how they all are embedded in the metabolical relation we inevitable have with the rest of nature. They brought, in other words, "nature" into the city, and urbanized the discussions on nature. Following, let me, with no further due, lay the theoretical groundwork, on which the sociological analysis of the Canal Istanbul Project would be meaningful.

1.2. Theoretical Discussion: For a Sociology of the Urban Political Ecology

The major theoretical framework of this thesis is the sub-field of political ecology, urban political ecology (UPE), which I will make use of for developing a critical sociological analysis of the political ecology of Canal Istanbul Project.

It is now a cliché that more than half of the world's population lives in cities. The most basic central idea of urban political ecology is that urban problems cannot be

fully understood or addressed without considering environmental problems. Cities constitute an ecology in their own right and the distinction between nature and cities is invalid. David Harvey's very famous quote is: "There is nothing unnatural about New York City". Everything inherent in city life and the elements that constitute the city itself are actually the transformed nature, the commodified nature, and the impact of human labor, technology, and capital investment on the given physical environment. Therefore, the urban political ecology framework teaches moving away from the dualistic way of thinking about nature and the city. First of all, it is important to mention that the urban political ecology framework is grounded on a structuralist perspective with a neo-Marxist tradition (Zimmer, 2010). There is a strong constitutive influence of Henri Lefebvre, Neil Smith and David Harvey, followed by Eric Swyngedouw and other that follow.

The urban political ecology perspective matters, in this case, because it provides a guidance for understanding the dynamics of socio-natural changes that are linked with the production and reproduction of urban life. The urban political ecology perspective provides thinking beyond city-nature dualism. A city is an ecological entity in itself and a project imposed upon a city would create a socio-natural change. Consequently, both should be considered together. Constructing both Canal Istanbul and the New City Project is a huge implementation of reproducing Istanbul's use of space. Space is a concept that is produced and reproduced in reference to context. Urban political ecology perspectives examine these particular situations and analyze socio-natural changes happening in the cities.

The prospective project would cause a serious socio-natural change. It will not only create an island in the middle of the city but will also have a serious social impact on urban life. An island means isolation in both ecological and social sense. Also, environmental destruction means jeopardizing the sufficiency of food and water, which are vital for the city, especially as Istanbul is on the brink of a crisis in these two areas. Social unrest multiplies in a city that struggles to meet its basic needs. Therefore, both ecology and social conditions are interrelated. This context brings us to how to conceptualize this interrelated state. The strong focus on "hybrids" in political ecology might help to operationalize this situation.

Swyngedouw took this concept and developed it through its processual character (Zimmer, 2010). He argued that hybrids are not one-dimensional and go through a wide variety of processes. These processes are shaped by physical, biological, chemical, but also cultural and discursive practices. According to Swyngedouw, social relations exist in a dialectical manner. Discourses and practices have a crucial role here. Social relations are related to them, while at the same time, they are embedded in social relations (Zimmer, 2010). Hybridization processes are power-laden processes. For example, the commodification of biological processes as usage of non-human entities in sewage treatment plants is not independent of power relations (Zimmer, 2010). Hybridization processes are therefore a micro-political issue. Specifically, cultural practices and discourses about power relations, social relations, and natural processes are better studied as micro-politics (Zimmer, 2010). In addition, UPE takes cities as hybrids that are reproduced by humans and non-humans (Zimmer, 2010). UPE operationalizes this perspective as focusing on the processes of this reproduction. These processes are social and historically particular (Zimmer, 2010, p. 349). They are influenced by power relations that mediate between humans as well as non-humans (Zimmer, 2010).

A Marxist-inspired UPE also problematizes the ideologies and practices of urban planners as they are the implementers of what Lefebvre calls “the conceived space.” (Lefebvre, 1996). This problematization rests on the urban planning ideas, dispositions and practices are in fact an attempt to mediate the relationship between the society, social space and its natural raw material that we come to call the environment. Therefore, urban political ecology’s one of the key questions is how the city and nature and their relationship evolved in human history. In each historical period, what are the determinant power relations involved in this reconceptualization process, who decides what constitutes a livable urban environment, and who wins and loses? These are important questions that can be answered through the theoretical lens of urban political ecology. Here in this debate, there is an influence of Lefebvre[1].

[1] For Lefebvre, space is a spatial practice that is about the material experience; a representation of space that is a conceptual model linked with direct practice; and a space of representation that is the lived social relation of users (Gottdiener, 1993). All three concepts of spatial practice, representation

Linking Lefebvre's conceptualization of space with urban planning is possible by focusing on representations of space. In this domain, conceived space contains the discourse on space. It would be not wrong to say that the plans and projections of the Canal Istanbul Project are related to the rhetoric imposed by the government. Istanbul's right to nature and the city is victimized for the sake of development ideology. The main rhetoric of the project is the enrichment of the country, and this enrichment is related to attracting foreign capital, one of the main actors of which is Qatar capital, which has political repercussions. The government's rhetoric is entirely linked to the "Vision 2023" projection. This projection refers to a scientifically and technologically developed Türkiye. The Yenişehir project is also planned to be a "smart" city with high technology. Wind power plants, which are expected to take wind from the Black Sea and convert it into energy, are included in the Yenişehir plans (Baysal, 2022). In today's sustainable cities fashion, it is not possible for new cities to be left behind the eco-city fashion. The smart eco-cities are new spatial forms of socio-natural landscapes.

Socio-natural landscapes can be conceptualized with the concept of "urban metabolism". This concept is used by Swyngedouw and Heynen and highlights the intertwined social processes, material metabolism, and spatial forms that lie in the creation processes of urban socio-natural landscapes (Keil, 2005). Another scholar, Sahely, as Keil mentioned, explains urban metabolism as the fluxes of material, energy, and water in an urban context (2005). In other words, the concept of urban metabolism helps us to grasp the fact that cities are comprised of metabolic flows and the notion of urban should be analyzed within its metabolic flows. For Swyngedouw, urbanization consists entirely of the incorporation of nature into metabolic processes and the urbanization of nature (Keil, 2005). Urbanization can be

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of space, and space of representation link to another triple conceptualization. Another triple condition is explained as perceived space, conceived space, and actual lived space. The above triplicity is linked with this triple condition. The spatial practice lies in perceived space; the representation of space is linked to conceived space; representational space refers to actual lived space and the intersection of these triple clusters is the social space. Perceived space and conceived space lie on a cognitive level or an abstract level. It is something that happens in our minds. However, lived space, or representational space is about the actual lived experiences that common people experience. It is actually the combination of perceived and conceived space. All these three areas have a dialectical relationship. Perceiving in simple terms is thinking of how space should be approached. Conceiving that goes beyond perceiving is actually about collecting more information about this social world. It is, for example, the works of urban designers, architects, and urban and regional planners, while the lived space is the space of artists and museums.

viewed as a process through metabolic circulatory flows, according to Swyngedouw (2006). His other concept is circulation. Both metabolism and circulation lie at the very core of urbanization and they provide the basis for the city's existence and its change (Swyngedouw, 2006). The city is a networked phenomenon constituted as a socio-environmental process that transforms metabolism of the nature (Swyngedouw, 2006).

Another important issue in the analysis of the urban political ecology of the Canal Istanbul Project is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is also in the field of urban political ecology because it has a serious impact on socio-natural relations. Neoliberalization is a macro process and in an intersection, these processes affect local environments, the people living in those environments, and their relations with the urban sphere and urban as it is. Therefore, seeing how dominant ideology and political forces affect and shape the environment and urban landscapes we live in, how these forces are not innocent, and what kind of damage they cause to the environment is an element that cannot be overlooked by those working in the field of urban political ecology. For example, urban water is another important issue linked to this topic. How urban water is produced and distributed is a political issue and neoliberalism privatized the distribution of water and the number of people suffering from this situation has increased. If the project is built in Istanbul, which is experiencing a water crisis, access to water will be a very serious problem. In addition to issues of ecological destruction and access, the issue of water must be addressed in the context of power dynamics. This is because the Canal Istanbul Project is an example of intervention against the normal flow of water and an example of modern engineering. It is a waterway project with a cement floor.

Water and its circulation process are not independent of power dynamics. It has a social meaning and is embedded in socio-economic processes. There is a privatization of water, which is a common and collective good. The privatization of water actually dates back to the 19th century and the qualified water produced is only available to the urban elite (Swyngedouw, 2004). After World War 1 and especially in the Fordist and Keynesian periods, water became a national concern and the state controlled its distribution. However, after the economic crisis of the 1970s,

privatization tendencies emerged to overcome the crises of Fordism and deregulation in the 80s. However, this does not mean that the state has taken its hands off the control of water, the control of the circulation of water has been either private or public/private. In this case, the privatization of water has brought about a commodification of water. Therefore, water had become a commodity in an "accumulation strategy" (Swyngedouw, 2004). The political and economic journey of water actually shows how the management of and access to water is inherent in the historical and social situations in which it is embedded.

For Swyngedouw, water is a hybrid formation and involves discursive and symbolic processes (2004). Water is connected to socio-spatial relations within a network (Swyngedouw, 2004). These socio-spatial relations are intrinsic to the political economy of the urban. It forms a link in a chain of both local and global circulation (Swyngedouw, 2004). This circulation works like a water metabolism. The metabolism in nature and man's relationship with nature is covered in the theoretical discussion. Water has more than one multiple metabolisms. Just as political ecology teaches, these metabolisms are linked to power dynamics. In other words, the organization and dominance of water are governed by these power dynamics. Furthermore, access to water, who accesses it, how they access it, under what conditions, and how much of it they access depends on this situation.

The metabolism of water mentioned here consists of the flow of water. This flow not only creates geographical formations but also symbolic meanings (Swyngedouw, 2004). What is meant by power dynamics here are the dynamics of water access and management based on ethnicity, gender, and class. It must be said that water is a power in itself. First of all, it is a biological necessity. Then, it is an active necessity for the production process of mankind, both for agriculture and industry. But water is a resource and this is where the access debate comes into play. The next issue after access is the element of struggle. Why do some groups have to fight for water or why do some groups have to protect their water as a resource? These processes of struggle are not independent of the process of urbanization. They constitute the political ecology of urbanization. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that urbanization has come about by organizing, mastering, and controlling water (Swyngedouw, 2004).

Another important issue about mastering water is modern engineering. In particular, the commodification of water within these systems, such as dams and waterways, is an example of water circulation. In this process of commodification, very large capitals are involved. Regions, even nations, are at stake here, and these are investments over a long period since huge amounts of money are the case. Swyngedouw studied these systems and found that such systems create a need for centralized control and a very extensive and very detailed division of labor (2004, p. 36). The political-economic history of these large systems or the management of water within urbanization has been covered very briefly above. The control of water and the engineering processes applied to it were initially financed and implemented by private companies. Later they were subjected to state intervention, and the capital was paid for by the state. However, this case has been replaced by public-private enterprises (Swyngedouw, 2004).

How urban water is produced and distributed is a political issue and neoliberalism privatized the distribution of water and the number of people suffering from this situation has increased.

In short, it is important to remember how Swyngedouw explains urbanization as a socio-spatial process of metabolizing nature and urbanizing the environment (Keil, 2005) and how these processes are political. These political processes require more detailed emphasis. However, there are critiques of it as well. Scholars of planetary urbanization accused urban political ecology scholars as they fall into the trap of methodological cityism which means an analytically and empirically obsessed focus on the traditional city (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2014). It also implies ignorance in terms of contemporary urbanization processes. Angelo and Wachsmuth argue that urban political ecology fails to follow its Lefebvrian roots.

Basic Lefebvrian promise of urban political ecology is working beyond traditional divisions such as urban/rural, city/town, and society/nature and creating insights following the new era of planetary urbanization (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2014). In their work, *Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Citysim*, Angelo and Wachsmuth highly criticize urban political ecology scholars

because they forgot this basic Lefebvrian promise. They first review UPE's history and then emphasize a need for a political ecology of the urbanization process. The scholars' main aim is to review UPE about planetary urbanization.

Before dealing with their debate, it might be helpful to first review planetary urbanization. It is a critical concept that Brenner and Schmid proposed in 2015 in their work "*Towards a new epistemology of the urban?*". They aim to reconceptualize the epistemology of the urban. According to them, the urban question requires a new and contemporary explanation that is related to 21st-century capitalism (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). The geography of the urban is under constant change. The struggles lived in the urban are happening in more harsh ways.

Therefore, the scholars call for a new methodology for studying urban. Their most crucial emphasis is that new conditions of urban are happening in a planetary way. They argue that all of the conditions of growth and decline, poverty and wealth mutually exist together and they are lived on a planetary scale (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). Their other emphasis is on the fact that the singular form of the city as a unit of analysis is no longer relevant. They, in this article, want to show there are new processes of "urbanization" on a planetary scale rather than focusing on cities as a singular form (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). These new processes consist of various formations, socio-metabolisms, and socio-economic conditions (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). The cases in the literature must be about the processes of urbanization, not the city. Therefore, Brenner and Schmid brought up this question:

> *"Is there - could there be - a new epistemology of the urban that might illuminate the emergent conditions, processes, and transformations associated with a world of generalized urbanization?" (Brenner & Schmid, 2015, p. 155).*

This is a question of epistemology. It is about "how we know what we know". Urban studies were epistemologically trapped in the domain of studies of the city. However, this is epistemologically wrong since the urban itself is a process, so a process cannot be reduced to a singular form such as the city. There is a Lefebvrian influence on planetary urbanization scholars and they remember Lefebvre's main argument about the urban that absorbs an epistemological field and became the "episteme of an

epoch” (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). In other words, looking at the urban to analyze society is crucial. The urban itself is an episteme.

Lefebvre’s interpretation of them opens up a new way for epistemological development. Therefore, his influence is crucial. In terms of urban political ecology, the criticisms come from the fact that its scholars forgot the Lefebvrian promise, as mentioned above. Angelo and Wachsmuth emphasize that the urbanization process is something beyond the rigidified notion of the city and it must be analyzed in a planetary context (2014). It is important here to emphasize again that urban is a process. This fact, as Harvey and Brenner explain separately, is urban reality. Therefore, methodological cityism is a trap to be avoided and the conceptualization of planetary urbanization is the most effective way out of this trap. However, as Connoly reveals, these criticisms might be taken as harsh. In his work, *Urban Political Ecology Beyond Methodological Cityism*, he showed that there are works from urban political ecology that did not fall into the trap of methodological cityism. Connoly tried to show that there are works that did not solely compose case studies of “cities” but also, in urban political ecology, there are compatible works with planetary urbanization. To open up these works, he first mentioned how these works should be approached. He emphasized that first, a decomposing of the criticisms is necessary, and then, recomposing of them is crucial. In this way and with a literature review, he proved that urban political ecology is still a relatable framework. It is a non-objective point of view to look at it as if it has fallen into the trap of complete methodological cityism.

Martinez et. al discuss the debate on "city" and "planetary urbanization" and state that they disagree with both theses in the methodological citysim debate, but that in fact both theses complement each other and that this debate is very useful. Although planetary urbanization puts forward important theses, they say that the "city" frame should not be abandoned. They say it has its benefits too. For example, the “city” can be used as a frame to analyze urban politics and social organization (Martinez et. al, 2020). This perspective considers cities as the actors of the changes taking place, and with the demographic transition that occurred after the 1980s, this perspective gave birth to the "urban age" thesis. The urban age thesis is not only used in academia but

also by the private sector because the increase in the urban consumer population and its new form allows the private sector to create new business opportunities (Martinez et. al, 2020). Other actors that use the urban age discourse and find it useful are global policy organizations and international financial institutions. Urban transformation is a development phenomenon for them. Scholars of planetary urbanization criticize the urban age discourse and argue that there is a disconnect between academia and urban policy practice (Martinez et. al, 2020). The city as a frame can be a useful frame for addressing global challenges, but the urban age discourse naturalizes the unjust power dynamics inherent in and experienced in the city (Martinez et. al, 2020).

While the urban age thesis takes an optimistic view of the city and city-based approaches, the planetary urbanization perspective criticizes this and argues that such an approach is not neutral to contemporary ideologies. However, Martinez et. al argue that denial of the city frame can be dangerous. According to them, the city is a necessary frame for grasping organized polity processes. They highlight that it is also dangerous to fall into technocratic tendency but for them, it is possible to take cities as local spaces where political discussions can be held (Martinez et.al, 2020). At the same time, they do not reject the theses of the planetary urbanization perspective. Especially, in terms of analyzing the socio-ecological crises, they find them crucial. Planetary urbanization can provide important insights to tackle the hegemonic discourses on neoliberalism and climate change, says Martinez et. al (2020). They note that the critical thinking aspect of planetary urbanization can be useful for global policy-making dynamics. In short, for scholars, the city as a frame is useful, but the thesis of planetary urbanization is also useful. They call the urban age vs. planetary urbanization debate a positive friction. This debate is treated as a kind of theory-practice debate and they say that there should not be this binary disjuncture. The city has a political significance and represents practice. They say that through this debate, which is treated as theory and practice, we can better understand today's changing urban world.

It is also necessary to analyze these debates from the point of a political economy of urbanization. All of these processes should also be considered together with

capitalism. In this sense, in addition to the readings of the urban political ecology framework, readings of Harvey were also conducted for this thesis. For Harvey, capitalist society must create a physical landscape because the processes of production and the reproduction of capitalism require its own space. Thus, urbanization is a process that is actively linked with the history of capitalism, and, Harvey, a Marxist geographer, examined this link deeply. His thought consists of crises of capitalism and especially the relations of accumulation and class struggle. For him, urbanization is connected to the dynamics of control over nature, accumulation processes, social control, and conflict (Fadaei, 2012). His main thesis is that: "urbanism, the city, and all related phenomena, were epiphenomena to the process of capital" (Fadaei, 2012). What is necessary for analyzing the urban, for him, is to grasp the social and economic system, rather than the spatial organization (Fadaei, 2012). In other words, Harvey has a historical-materialist approach and he implied that urbanization should be conceptualized relationally since the concept of urban is determined by the social and economic system (Fadaei, 2012). Surplus production has a key role in forming cities. Therefore, the city is the result of relationships between economic production and society.

Another subject of Harvey's analysis is the crises inherent in capitalism. Capitalism is not a pure system. It consists of class conflicts and processes that push itself into crisis. Harvey explains these processes with his switching theory and the concept of spatial fix comes into the picture here. The term "fix" has a double meaning in Harvey's thought. The first meaning is related to the fact that capital is fixed on the land and the second meaning is a metaphorical meaning implying a solution to capitalist crises through geographical expansion (Fadaei, 2012). Actually, for Harvey, urbanization itself is a spatio-temporal fix to the capitalist crises of over-accumulation. The context of crises that are inherent to capitalism is related to switching circuits since capital flows through each circuit when a crisis of over-accumulation occurs to absorb surplus capital. Over-accumulation brings crisis as capitalists incur losses by retaining surplus value. To theorize this situation, first Lefebvre used the term switching circuits in the 1970s and Harvey continues to analyze this conceptualization to elaborate on the capitalist motives behind the investments conducted in urban built environments.

Capital flows in three ways, or more precisely in three stages. First is the primary circuit. This circuit refers to investments in the production of basic commodities. Basic commodity production means industrial production. If there is overproduction in this circuit, there is over-accumulation, which leads to unemployment and falling profits. In such a situation, redirecting capital to a second circuit is the preferred method of capitalists as a temporary solution. The secondary circuit refers to investments in fixed capital and the consumption fund. Fixed capital is factories, machinery, and the built environment. Investments in built environment refer to investments in physical infrastructure, i.e. roads, bridges, and buildings, whereas the consumption fund is the investments in built environment for consumption such as shopping malls, etc. However, this circuit challenges individual capitalists. Individual capitalists invest in the city with the support of the municipality, i.e. public-private form. In this case, the built environment becomes a serving point for further accumulation and production. Also, it is about the re-creation of the labor force.

However, just like in the primary circuit, there is the possibility of over-accumulation in the secondary circuit as well. This time capital is channeled into the tertiary circuit, which consists of investments in science, technology, and education. Although these flows are developed as a defense mechanism against the crises inherent in capitalism, Harvey warns that there is no escape from over-accumulation. Also, the motive to find more productive forms of investment in the built environment also brings a devaluation in the exchange value (Healy, 2014). Therefore, this lack of coherence brings a nexus of confusion, struggle, and conflict. When class conflict is the issue, Harvey warns that laws of accumulation are at stake as well. If there is success on the labor class front, it is not the end. The capitalist class must reproduce itself. Even if the working class wins the class struggle, this gain is still within the rules of capitalism, within its laws of accumulation. Also, Harvey elaborated on the fact that investments in working-class housing or health services may turn into a vehicle for accumulation as well (1978, p. 129). At the same time, the switching of investments is a response to class conflict, Harvey says. Therefore, he also implies that class struggle can push the switching crises in a way that favors the working class. It can change the structure of investment flows

(Harvey, 1978, p. 129). However, Harvey again warns that this is within the motive of the capitalist class to further increase accumulation without loss (Harvey, 1978, p.129).

In addressing capitalism's law of accumulation, this context leads to Harvey's concept of “accumulation by dispossession”. Similar to the theory of switching circuits, the concept of accumulation by dispossession refers to an example of escape from overaccumulation. It actually refers to the “new imperialism”. Harvey argued that an unsuccessful attempt in terms of expanded reproduction is followed by accumulation by dispossession (2004, p. 64). The concept can be summarized as follows; it is a neoliberal and new type of imperialism that consists of the centralization of wealth and power in a few people by depriving some people, especially public assets of their wealth. Harvey, in his work, *The ‘New’ Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession* (2004), at first emphasized Marx’s general theory of capital accumulation. By describing the general theory of capital accumulation, Harvey quotes Luxemburg and says that there are two aspects of it. One is about the commodity market and the spheres where surplus value is produced such as the factory, the agricultural estate, etc. This purely economic aspect consists of a transaction between the capitalist and the wage laborer (Harvey, 2004). Another aspect is the relationship between the capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production that appear on the international stage as colonial policy, war, and international loan system (Harvey, 2004). Harvey strongly touches upon the imperialism aspect of accumulation in this article.

Before opening up imperialist periods, he mentioned primitive accumulation. The first aspect mentioned above is the primitive accumulation. Following, there is a construction of it by the classical political economy: It is about the freely functioning and competitive markets of private property and this is followed by the issues of juridical individualism, freedom of contract, and law and governance (Harvey, 2004). There is an important role of the state here. The state is the apparatus that allows money to be conserved, which keeps the cycle going (Harvey, 2004). Primitive accumulation, then, is replaced by expanded reproduction. To make economic growth possible more is produced than the need. But if only the economic

dimension is considered, the issue remains one-sided. The dialectical method Marx used provides to be aware of crises of overaccumulation (Harvey, 2004). There are also issues of social inequality, exploitation, and instability. However, Harvey also warned that terms like primitive accumulation and expanded reproduction are no longer relevant to the contemporary forms of accumulation processes. Therefore, Harvey used the term accumulation by dispossession rather than using these terms (2004).

He explained that accumulation by dispossession can occur in various ways and in each historical condition, it happens (2004). Imperial geographical expansions are a spatio-temporal fix, says Harvey. He describes the dynamics of accumulation in every period of imperialism. It was after the 1970s that a new phase of finance capital is entering into the picture. The new imperialism revolves around the relationship between finance and the state. This is to ensure the flow of capital and redirection. Accumulation by dispossession is this. This system was much more harmful, according to Harvey, and class struggles began to regain lost rights through privatization (2004). Accumulation by dispossession, here, is related to global capitalism and, after the 1990s, transnational capitalist corporations became in the scene (Harvey, 2004). This is nothing else than a new form of imperialism, but rather than Europe as a superpower, the US is the superpower, as Harvey explains (2004). From then on, the class struggle became against issues such as adjustments imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and privatization (Harvey, 2004). Therefore, the struggle took the character of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist character.

What is at stake is that the neoliberal state is permitting to exploitation of new sources of wealth through accumulation by dispossession. The role of the state is to be the facilitator of profit generated from the rent (Öztürk, 2018). In this regard, Harvey strongly emphasizes the fact that the new imperialism cannot occur without the state. Accumulation and its transformations, especially the neoliberal form is again brutal. Fraud and theft are at stake and environmental degradation is at its harsh. New territories mean new markets. Especially in the global North, with the shift to a finance-centric economy and the de-industrialization and green movement,

transnational corporations have transferred their production sites, i.e. factories, to the countries of the global South. In the global South or Third World countries, after the development and modernization movement of the 60s, the dominance of the financial sector has also affected them. The issue is global, fragmented, and particular. The relentless urbanization practices and the privatization of public goods have also taken place in these countries, and these processes imported from the West, especially with the IMF's loans and monitoring, have somehow made these countries dependent on the West again. All the while, natural areas, and even cultural artifacts have been dispossessed and privatized. Harvey explains this situation as new imperialism.

The concept of accumulation by dispossession is a strong concept that fits with the contemporary condition of capitalism. In this new kind of imperialism, what is behind its rationale is to open new territories for sites of investment (Fadaei, 2012). Harvey brought this concept as an alternative to Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation as mentioned above. Dispossession as privatization is also a case of environmental degradation (Fadaei, 2012). The concentration of resources through dispossession also leads to environmental degradation, especially in the urban context, as land and natural resources fall into the hands of capitalists. Harvey also mentions biopiracy, patenting of genetic material, destruction of common air, water, and land and commodification of nature, privatization of social housing (Fadaei, 2012). All of these processes are examples of accumulation by dispossession. In terms of the urban context, privatization processes that are accumulation by dispossession are a form of segregation of cities (Fadaei, 2012).

Another issue Harvey touches upon is the reproduction of urban space. This issue is the core issue of this thesis since the Canal Istanbul project poses a case of reproduction of urban space. The New City Project that is planned to be added to the project is nothing else than taking the urban space as a social product and a new area to commodify land and nature. First of all, the issue of the reproduction of urban space is a broad theme and the link with Harvey here is about the fact that switching to a secondary circuit is a way of reproduction of urban space. First of all, the process of the reproduction of urban space occurs through the commodification of urban space (Öztürk, 2018). For example, urban development projects are a mode of

the reproduction of urban space since they change land and its usage (Öztürk, 2018). This process should not merely be taken as a project. Urban space is a socially produced space dominated by capitalist interests and the state (Öztürk, 2018). Therefore, it is possible to say that economic and political structures affect the reproduction of space. In this way, a change in capitalist relations ends with a change in the usage of urban space. The reproduction of surplus value, which is the main goal of capitalism, manifests itself in the urban sphere by generating profit through rent. In this context, any process of urban transformation or mega-projects turns the city into a means of production of surplus value.

The connection between the readings of Harvey and the project can be established through the concepts of “spatial fix” and “accumulation by dispossession”. In terms of the spatial fix, the project lies within the secondary circuit. The construction of the canal represents a spatial fix as the Turkish government seeks to overcome economic challenges and attract investment by creating new development opportunities. However, concerns are raised about accumulation through dispossession, as the project could lead to displacement of local communities, environmental degradation, and commodification of land along the canal route. The privatization of land and the potential concentration of wealth in the hands of a few coincides with Harvey's concept of accumulation through the dispossession of previously public or common resources.

In other words, the construction of the canal raises concerns about the forced displacement of those living along the canal route, disrupting established social structures and livelihoods. This displacement constitutes a form of dispossession as people lose their homes and their connection to the land. Furthermore, the project is likely to lead to the commodification and privatization of land along the canal corridor, with the government allocating areas for commercial and industrial purposes. This process involves the transformation of previously common or public lands into privately owned assets, in line with David Harvey's concept of accumulation through dispossession. Small-scale landowners, including farmers, can be particularly vulnerable to dispossession as their land can be purchased for large-scale commercial projects, contributing to the unequal distribution of resources.

Furthermore, the canal's environmental impacts, including changes to aquatic ecosystems and land use, represent a form of dispossession for local communities that depend on these resources for their livelihoods.

Another theme of the literature review for the thesis is the relationship between social inequalities and megacities in the case of Istanbul. Istanbul as a megacity in which the population is higher than 15 million is a sphere where social inequality is at stake. Before dealing with megaprojects, it is necessary to look up how this relationship is lived in Istanbul. There is high urban polarization and inequality of opportunities in terms of education, labor, health, and infrastructure in the city. First, it is crucial to open up the effects of neoliberalism on Istanbul. There is a strong correlation between neoliberalism and the reproduction of urban spaces. The trend after the 1980s in terms of urban space is the world cities that are directed by excessive accumulation of capital (Yalçıntan et al., 2019). To be a world city and attract foreign investments, there is a competition which has begun. These cities started to move away from industrial production as a core production style and this competition made deregulation a primary force. Therefore, the resources allocated for public needs and collected for services have been used to make these cities more attractive to foreign investors, and it is possible to say that neoliberalism plays an active role in the reproduction of space (Yalçıntan et al., 2019).

After the 1980 coup, Istanbul was introduced to neoliberalism and began to experience this process. During this period, the city's economy was restructured about the reproduction of the city’s space. The industry moved out of the city and the finance, real estate, and service sectors became dominant in the inner city. In this reproduction of space, the vision of urban planning has naturally begun to be discredited because deregulation is on the rise (Yalçıntan et al., 2019). Holistic planning has been replaced by investment-oriented planning with short-term solutions. In this case, the reproduction of space has begun to be implemented through this new style of planning, and this process of change is referred to as "transformation processes". Especially after the 1990s, a dominant urban transformation discourse was formed. The need for transformation after the 1999 earthquake played an important role in legitimizing this discourse (Yalçıntan et al.,

2019). However, it was the deregulation introduced by the Justice and Development Party in the 2000s that paved the way for urban transformation. In this way, the government introduced legal regulations to pave the way for urban transformation. These regulations are quite frequent and the demand to attract foreign capital to the country, which is the core intention of neoliberal spatial production, has been effective in shaping the JDP's policies on Istanbul.

As the population in Istanbul increased, vacant land decreased and land values started to increase. In this case, the accumulation of wealth started to consist of earnings from land ownership instead of trade (Yalçıntan et al., 2019). Urban land became a very powerful commodity. In Istanbul, this situation was very brutal for the urban poor. Urban transformation and gentrification efforts have led to social exclusion and polarization. The urban poor living in the center have been evicted and driven to the periphery of the city. For example, the Roman people of Sulukule were portrayed as dangerous and had to live in this scenario. The Romans who were left to live in public housing could not adapt to apartment life and had to return, but their neighborhood is now a gentrified neighborhood that appeals to the high-income group. This story is an example of how social inequality is experienced in a megacity.

Social inequality is also inequality in access to resources, as noted above. These resources can be infrastructure resources as well as natural resources. For example, coastal areas are often occupied by luxury restaurants and waterfront mansions. The same situation will most likely occur after the construction of Canal Istanbul and in the New City project to be built at its foot. Therefore, it is essential to conduct urban political ecology studies about Istanbul. There are very few urban political ecology studies on Istanbul in the literature, but Bengi Akbulut and Ayfer Bartu Candan's "Beyond One or Two Trees: Looking at Istanbul from the Framework of Political Ecology" is a work that fills the gap. They mentioned Swyngedouw's definition of the city and adapted this definition to Istanbul. They have understood the city, of Istanbul, as a process of socio-ecological transformations woven with inequalities. Their research aims to reveal the discursive-symbolic constructs that play an important role in this process and to bring the conflicts and injustices that exist in the city to the agenda (Akbulut & Candan, 2019).

First of all, they explained the debates on urban political ecology and reflected on the relationship between the city and nature in Istanbul to situate Istanbul in these debates. In this context, they talked about the megaprojects that have been built and planned to be built in Istanbul. Looking at these projects from the perspective of urban political ecology, the discussion includes social injustices as well as the damage they will cause to the environment and nature. These projects are the 3rd Bridge, 3rd Airport, and Canal Istanbul. The first two have been built and have caused serious damage to the northern forests of the city.

A discussion on urban political ecology is also essential to expose irregularities in the process of building these megaprojects. The political processes of these projects are highly controversial and non-transparent. There is a serious top-down approach in the lands opened for development and the tenders held. As Tugal says, a “neoliberal statist” framework prevails (2022). Usually, the term “embedded neoliberalism” was used to explain the issue of megaprojects in Istanbul. However, Tugal mentioned that this conceptualization is inadequate. While embedded neoliberalism implies that an economy consists of governmental regulation and social inclusion for the sake of expansion of the market (Tugal, 2022), neoliberal statism is comprised of a controlling government and a marketization that is limited to the state (Tugal, 2022). Tugal says that the government's policies and attitudes can be better formulated with this concept. This is beyond the debate of public and private or the hybridization of the two. When Tugal's political work is read together with that of Candan and Akbulut, it is seen that they complement each other. Both have dealt with urban injustice in different ways and both have made a political analysis of urban injustice. While Tugal focuses on consent, Candan and Akbulut talk about injustices in access to resources and unjust power dynamics caused by megaprojects and their implementation.

To address these unjust power dynamics, Candan and Akbulut asked several questions based on an urban political ecology perspective (Akbulut & Candan, 2019, p. 285):

- Which social groups will benefit and advantage from these projects, and which social groups will be victimized?

- How will the physical, social, and economic consequences of these projects affect which groups?
- How do the decision-making processes for interventions of this scale in the city work?
- Who has identified the 'needs' that these projects purport to respond to, and which social groups' 'needs' are these?
- Who will live in the city of approximately 1-1.5 million people planned to be built on the edge of the Canal Istanbul project?
- The construction of the 3rd Airport, which is targeted to serve the mobility of 100 million people, will meet which needs of this city and for whom?

The main claim of the scholars who raise these questions is that instead of blaming urban problems on unplanned urbanization and squatting, the main focus should be on shopping malls and residences. In other words, the focus should be on the role of these residential areas in reinforcing urban injustices (Akbulut & Candan, 2019). Megaprojects are being added to this debate and it is clear that Canal Istanbul will unjustly transform the city and severely damage public space and the perception of public space. Scholars conclude their chapter by re-emphasizing the importance of environmental and urban justice. They argue that the main issue we face is environmental and urban justice (Akbulut & Candan, 2019). Looking at the social and ecological processes that produce the city makes it easier to see the inequalities and injustices in the city (Akbulut & Candan, 2019). Just like other urban political ecology scholars, they say that the nature of the city is not experienced equally. This work is a rare example that introduced urban political ecology to Istanbul.

In conclusion, urban political ecology is a whole with its pros and cons, and it is a highly valid theoretical framework when combined with the planetary urbanization framework, following the path of Lefebvre without falling into methodological cityism. The theory aims to systematize the facts and the body of ideas that enable us to understand these facts. Science is a whole consisting of a system, and urban political ecology approaches the urban phenomenon in a holistic way. It constitutes the main paradigm of this thesis and is very necessary for the sociological and political analysis of the planned Canal Istanbul project.

Having laid down the aim and main questions of the thesis backed up by the theoretical background and theoretical discussion, now I would like to give preliminary information on various aspects of the Canal Istanbul Project. This way, I hope to connect the main concerns of the thesis, its theoretical background and what the Project is all about.

1.3. Preliminary Information on the Canal Istanbul Project.

The prospective length of the canal is going to be 45 kilometers and its base is going to be 275 meters with 21 meters of water depth. The planned route of the canal is going to remain east of Terkos Lake as the North exit and east of the Kücükcekmece Lake as the South exit. In the middle of the route, there is the Sazlıdere Dam. At the end of the project, Istanbul is going to have an island-shaped landscape. The project contains one railway, seven motorways, and eight bridge construction plans. The project is not limited to these plans. It comes with an additional the New City Project. According to this plan, the hinterland of the canal is going to consist of a new, smart, and ecological district which is going to occupy 100.000 square meters of area. The estimated population of this prospective district is 1.128.897. The estimated budget for the project is 75 Billion Turkish Liras. In terms of the location of the project, following the route, the location of the project was determined as Küçükçekmece district for 6,149 meters, Avcılar district for 3,189 meters, Başakşehir district for 6,061 meters and Arnavutköy district for the remaining 27,383 meters (Neden Kanal İstanbul?, 2020).

The project is accompanied by integrated plans. These are marinas, container ports, recreation areas, and logistics centers (Neden Kanal İstanbul?, 2020). These planned integrated structures are Küçükçekmece Marina, Marmara Container Port, which is on the Küçükçekmece coastline and planned to be west of the Marmara Sea entrance, Black Sea Recreation Area, planned to be west of the Black Sea entrance, and Black Sea Logistics Center, planned to be east of the Black Sea entrance (Neden Kanal Istanbul?, 2020). In addition, additional facilities are planned to be constructed to fulfill a number of functions in terms of maritime and safety measures as well as the operation of the canal. These include breakwaters, emergency mooring areas,

anchorage areas, lighthouses, towage areas, maintenance stations and operation buildings, ship traffic systems, and navigational aids (Neden Kanal Istanbul?, 2020).

1.4. Introduction to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

The preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA, hereafter) Report is mandatory for every project planned by the state that concerns the environment. The aim is to determine the positive and negative impacts of planned projects on the socio-ecological environment. Assessments are made up of a few stages, which include application, pre-construction, construction, operation, and post-operation stages (ÇED Uygulamaları,2018).

The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change of the Republic of Turkey approves EIA reports. A commission is established by the Ministry consisting of the unit managing the relevant process and the personnel of the relevant public institutions (ÇED Uygulamaları, 2018). First, the scope and boundaries of the evaluation are determined. For example, the boundary could be a geographical area. Next, potential impacts on the environment are identified. When estimating impacts, their significance and magnitude are at the forefront. Impacts can be considered as positive and negative, as well as direct or indirect. The official publicly stated aim is to eliminate or minimize the environmental negative impacts and encourage positive social outcomes.

The final Canal Istanbul EIA report was published in 2020 and approved by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change on January 17, 2020. Since 2016, the General Directorate of Infrastructure Investments of the Republic of Turkey has been involved in the execution of the project and was officially given the responsibility for the execution of the works on February 4, 2017. On March 17, 2017, it was proposed to include the survey and design works in the investment programs, and on July 14, 2017, the survey and design tender was launched. The contract was signed with Yüksel Project International Corporation and the works have started.

The Canal Istanbul project is considered in three phases and the environmental and social impacts of these phases are assessed in the report. These phases are the pre-

construction preparation period, construction period, and operation period. The report includes possible measures for the impacts that may occur during these periods. The studies to evaluate these measures are described in detail in the report as follows: measurement and analysis studies to determine the current situation; marine and terrestrial flora and fauna studies; social impact assessment studies and cultural heritage impact studies (EIA, 2020,1- 4). In the Social Impact Assessment annex of the report, the social factors examined are social status; population; settlement; employment; regional economy; agricultural activities and livestock; agricultural productivity; traffic, and transportation (EIA, 2020, P. 1 -7).

In the report, two arguments supporting the project are represented. These arguments are: 1) The canal will reduce ship traffic in the Bosphorus and prevent ship accidents in the Bosphorus; 2) The project will bring economic development. They are based on the fact that the Bosphorus is a cultural and historical heritage. They are mentioned in the introduction of the EIA report, where it is stated that the construction of the canal will be legitimate and beneficial to the public. The report states that the Turkish Straits are one of the most difficult waterways in the world and mentions that traffic in the Bosphorus, especially in the Bosphorus, is increasing both for international and urban transportation. The following projection is mentioned: by the 2070s, ship traffic in the Bosphorus will reach around 86,000. The same projections and the two arguments mentioned above are also mentioned in the description and purpose of the project in the report. The statements are generally that Canal Istanbul will not harm nature in the region or that care will be taken during the construction phase of the project to avoid harming nature and biodiversity.

The World Union for Conservation of Nature's 1994 and 2008 definitions of "protected area" are given in the report, and in the 2008 definition, the protected area is "areas with clearly defined geographical boundaries, recognized, dedicated and managed by legal or other effective means for the long-term conservation of nature and associated ecosystem services and cultural values". Following this definition, the areas protected by legal legislation are listed: National Park, Nature Reserve, Wildlife Development Area, Wild Animal Settlement Area, Natural Park, Natural Monument, and Special Environmental Protection Zone. It was then explained that

the project area is not within these zones. However, it is clearly stated that Terkos and Küçükçekmece Lakes and Şamlar Nature Park are in the impact area. In this context, the Terkos and Küçükçekmece Lakes are designated as sensitive areas, as the canal, if built, will pass through Küçükçekmece Lake, in which case this lagoon will be destroyed; but the fact that the two lakes are in the impact area and will be damaged is legitimized by the fact that these areas have no legal status. A detailed explanation of potential environmental and social impacts and critical reading of the reports are going to be explained in the further chapters. However at this early stage, suffice it to say that the considerable damage to the two of the important fresh water resources of Istanbul is handled vis-à-vis their "legal status," or lack thereof, and not as a potential political ecological and water supply problem is very telling the general approach of the project planners.

1.5. A Brief History of the Project

The idea of creating a canal between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea is not new. The idea of planning an alternative waterway to the Bosphorus first dates back to the Roman Empire. The correspondence between Pliny, Governor of Britain, and Emperor Tranianus proves this (Çınar, 2017). The first idea put forward was the idea of Sakarya River transportation. Governor Pliny proposed to connect the Sakarya River to Lake Sapanca and the lake to the Sea of Marmara through a canal. The aim was to facilitate the transportation of materials from the northern regions to Istanbul, such as marble and timber, which would be used for construction in Istanbul. However, the lake was found to be higher than the sea and the project was abandoned. Emperor Traianus appealed to Governor Pliny to send a control officer and a master (Benek, 2016).

The idea of connecting the Black Sea and Marmara was first put forward during the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century (Çınar, 2017). The Ottoman Empire tried to realize three major projects during this period. These projects were to unite the Don and Volga Rivers, to open a canal in Suez and to connect Lake Sapanca to the Marmara and Black Sea through the Sakarya River (Bardakçı, 2011). Of these projects, only the Suez project was realized and the project to unite the Black Sea

and the Marmara Sea was tried six times by the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century remained unsuccessful attempts.

In the Republican era, the first mention of the Canal Istanbul Project was made in TÜBİTAK's Science and Technique (Bilim ve Teknik) magazine in August 1990. Yüksel Önem, a consultant to the Ministry of Energy at the time, wrote an article titled "*I'm Thinking about the Istanbul Canal*" and envisioned the project route as starting from Lake Büyükçekmece and passing west of Lake Terkos (Çınar, 2017). In 1994, Bülent Ecevit, then President of the Democratic Left Party, also wanted to realize Canal Istanbul, a project to connect the Marmara Sea to the Black Sea. He first announced the project as a "mega project" at a press conference on January 17 (Özgönül, 2021). Necdet Özkan, the Democratic Left Party's candidate for Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, also attended the press conference. Özkan is the older brother of former deputy prime minister Hüsamettin Özkan and was deputy mayor in charge of investments when Aytekin Kotil, a Republican People's Party member, was mayor of Istanbul (Özgönül, 2021). He is the one who presented the idea of the project to Bülent Ecevit (Özgönül, 2021).

In the project, it is planned to build ports at the two mouths of the canal and create free zones, and it is planned to be financed by the build-operate-transfer model and foreign loans ("1994'te Ecevit Ortaya Attı", 2011). Increasing maritime traffic in the Bosphorus was given as a justification just like the basic rationale in the present that is used to make the project happen. Bülent Ecevit articulated the project before the 1994 local elections ("1994'te Ecevit Ortaya Attı", 2011). The project was used in the election campaigns of the Democratic Left Party and the project was included in election brochures. Istanbul Deputy Erdoğan Toprak, who was in the party during the election period, spoke to Sözcü Newspaper and stated the following:

> Canal Istanbul was the flagship and locomotive project of the Democratic Left Party in 1994. Our Istanbul Metropolitan candidate was Necdet Özkan and I was in charge of Istanbul elections in the party. Bülent Ecevit had a pre-election meeting with Necdet Özkan and brought up Canal Istanbul as a 'mega project'. (Özgönül, 2021).

After Bülent Ecevit made a presentation for the campaign, he met with academics and scientists and made evaluations on the risks of the project and held meetings on

the Montreux, ecological balance and excavation, cost-benefit analysis of the project and the benefit of the country. According to Toprak, Bülent Ecevit made the following statements to other politicians in the party:

> Canal Istanbul was our local election project. We made evaluations in terms of ecological balance, Bosphorus traffic, the Montreux Treaty, the increasing population of Istanbul, the cost-benefit analysis of the project, the country's interests and risks. We saw its very inconvenient sides, gave up on it and never brought it to the agenda again. (Özgönül, 2021).

In this context, Bülent Ecevit abandoned the project, taking into account the warnings of expert opinion. In the current agenda, many experts again oppose the project. This issue is discussed in detail in the fifth chapter of the thesis. The Canal Istanbul project under the Justice and Development Party era was also used in the party's election campaigns in connection with the party's "Vision 2023" mission ("Fatih Altaylı: '13 yıl, 7 seçim geçti'", 2023). The project was promoted on the promise of economic development and progress which are the main premises of the part.

The reasons for Ecevit's abandonment of the project and the insistence of the Justice and Development Party government on the project may have been economic differences between the periods. In the early 1990s, the Turkish economy was struggling to cope with currency crises, inflation, and unemployment. The government's priority was therefore to fix the economy. This may have raised doubts about the cost and feasibility of the project.

In addition, political uncertainty may also have influenced this decision. Coalition governments were common in Türkiye in the early 1990s. Embarking on a large-scale project with uncertainty over its cost and economic return may have been postponed for these reasons. The Ecevit government may have prioritized economic recovery. When the current Canal Istanbul Project is discussed in this context, it can be argued that unemployment, foreign debt and inflation in Türkiye are at an all-time high and an analogy can be drawn. Although Turkey is in a slightly better economic situation than it was in the 90s, the increase in the exchange rate, especially since 2018, is very difficult to control. Democratic violations and foreign policies are likely to underlie this situation.

1.6. A Window to the Financing of the Project

In the Justice and Development Party government's project, the build-operate-transfer model was also preferred as the financial model, but there have been cases of external financiers withdrawing during tender processes. The tender process of the project is planned as a separate tender process for each part of the project planned to be built in the region (Öztürk, 2021). The first tender was in 2020 for the relocation of the historic Dursunköy and Odabaşı bridges in the project's impact area. Five companies participated in this tender and the bids were accepted as Mukarnas Architecture 500 thousand TL, Safir Geotechnical 507 thousand TL, Altınparmak Architecture 408 thousand TL, and Artuklu Architecture's invalid bid ("Kanal İstanbul Projesi için ilk ihale yapıldı", 2020). The tender specifications required the preservation of the historic bridges and the dismantling and transportation of the bridges was deemed appropriate.

In 2021, the tender for the Sazlıdere Bridge was canceled by the Council of State. The reason behind this cancellation is that the tender was in violation of Public Procurement Law ("Danıştay'ın iptal ettiği Kanal İstanbul ihalesi", 2022). The Council of State issued a final decision on the grounds that paragraph 21-b, one of the paragraphs applied in the tender, did not comply with the principle of urgency. However, it was reported in the newspapers that the tender was held again on May 31, 2022 without an announcement based on this paragraph and that the same companies participated. In the first tender, TL 3.1 billion was awarded to the participating companies. In the repeated tender, the cost was calculated as 6 billion 702 million 753 thousand 209 TL ("Danıştay'ın iptal ettiği Kanal İstanbul ihalesi", 2022). The tender was again awarded to Yapı ve Yapı, Gülermak, and Taşyapı.

The tender for the first phase of TOKI's mass housing to be built in, planned for the Yenişehir Project, which is integrated into the Project, It consists of 844 housing units and the tender was awarded to Gürtaş Yapı with one billion 159 million TL. The tender for the second phase was awarded to Yılkanur Construction with 763 million TL. This phase consists of 716 houses and 10 shops. The tender for the third phase, consisting of 621 houses and 10 shops, was canceled three times. The reasons

for the cancellation were that there were no bidders and the bids were high in other sessions (Güvemli, 2023). The tender for the fourth phase, which included 826 houses and a primary school, was announced in April 2023. Five bids were submitted and Yılkanur Construction won the tender with TL 977 million 700 thousand (Güvemli, 2023). The tender for the fifth phase, consisting of 925 houses, 8 shops and a mosque, was held on November 25, 2022, but the result of the tender has not yet been announced.

The intensity of participation in the tenders suggests that the Canal Istanbul project has become an investment opportunity for domestic capital. Moreover, this large-scale mega project is also an attraction for foreign capital. One of the main reasons for the construction of Canal Istanbul is to attract foreign capital. This mega project has been a major attraction for Qatari investors in particular due to its potential to provide a return on investment. This may contribute to the growing interest of Qatari businesspeople in the real estate sector in Turkey and the emergence of various business opportunities.

According to Cumhuriyet newspaper's article titled "Qatar's love for the canal... Purchased 44 acres of land." (2019), the mother of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikha Moza, established a company in Türkiye with a capital of 100 thousand TL in Başakşehir region. It was revealed that the company purchased 44 acres of land on the route of the Canal Istanbul project within 1.5 months after its establishment. In another news report, it is stated that advertisements for the Canal Istanbul project have been regularly broadcast in Qatar for the last two years. This seems to have increased Qatari interest in real estate investments in the region ("Canal Istanbul ads have been aired in Qatar for two years", 2021). In the news article titled "Canal Istanbul creates excitement in Qatar", Yetim, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Emlak Konut GYO, states that the project has created great excitement in the region. Yetim states that Qatari investors' interest in Turkey's real estate sector has increased due to the incentives provided by the government (2018). Another headline reads "Qataris set their sights on Canal Istanbul land". The Canal Istanbul project was the centerpiece of a fair organized in Doha, the capital of Qatar, to further strengthen the business partnership between Türkiye and Qatar (2018). Türkiye is a strategic dialogue

partner of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and has signed an agreement to cooperate on economic issues. These countries have turned to construction projects in other countries to diversify their oil-dependent economies (Baysal, 2022). Therefore, it is no wonder that a project like Canal Istanbul is attractive for an oil-rich country like Qatar.

Before finishing this introductory chapter, in what follows I would also like to discuss the methodological issues of writing a thesis on a planned project that has not been implemented as of the time of writing in December 2023. I would like to lay down the ways in which I ask questions, develop discussions and provide some answers about the conundrums of the Canal Istanbul Project. Limitations regarding the methodology will also be highlighted where necessary. Certain limitations necessarily apply to write thesis on the sociology of a planned and unimplemented project as the discipline of sociology is at its best when there is a relatively finished process that has some observable social outcomes.

How was the research problem approached, and in what ways the research questions that were laid down at the outset is opened up, elaborated upon and discussed? To be blunt, while some of the research questions were answered at least at one level, others proved to be difficult to provide an answer for as the Project is still at the planning stage and has not been implemented. I will leave this discussion to the limitations of the research part, which I will dwell upon in the conclusion chapter at the end. I will do so as it also enables us to think about conducting a sociological research on a process of planning stage, while the overt demonstration of results do not manifest themselves.

As aforementioned in the discussion on the problem of this research is the fact that the project will have both sociological and ecological impacts. Istanbul is already very ecologically degraded and socially, it is a city where urban inequality is considerable, traffic is chaotic and crime is relatively high when compared with other cities in Turkey. In this case, it is essential to examine the potential socio-environmental impacts of a new mega project that is planned to be added to the city that is advertised by its supporters as irreversible and revolutionary.

The project should be handled in a multidimensional way. First, it is possible to hypothesize that the project would have, by and large, negative consequences socially and ecologically. Secondly, since its announcement in 2011, the project has generated a lot of controversies in the media. Third, the project has been evaluated by experts and NGOs and several reports have been prepared. Finally, the project is related to politics[2]. In this case, these points constitute the main themes of the research. All of them interact with each other and have a role in influencing the projects' development processes and their potential impacts.

[2] In the field of political science, the distinction between "politics" and "political" is a fundamental aspect of scientific research. Political scientists engage in a comprehensive study of "politics", which encompasses the analysis of political systems, structures, and processes at various levels of governance. This includes investigating the distribution of political power, decision-making mechanisms, and the functioning of political institutions. At the same time, the term "political" is used as an adjective within political science to describe certain aspects of the political sphere. By studying political parties, ideologies, behaviors, institutions, and processes, academics can investigate the intricacies of how political systems function. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, political science aims to develop theories and frameworks that improve our understanding of political phenomena and contribute to a nuanced understanding of governance, political behavior, and social influence.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE REPRODUCTION OF URBAN LIFE

2.1. Introduction

It would not be wrong to say that the Canal Istanbul Project is a project to reproduce urban space by promising progress and development. However, beneath the facade of "progress", there are elements that threaten the well-being of the communities in the area of influence. This affects not only the people of the region but in fact the entire city. If the project is realized, it will create an island of additional five million inhabitants to an already overcrowded city of about 18 Million residents. This will seriously affect the demographic structure of the city. The project could reinforce social and urban inequalities and lead to loss of livelihoods. This chapter is centered around the theme of the reproduction of urban space and urban life and describes what the project restricts and hinders. First, urban inequalities in Istanbul are introduced, and second, the impact of the project on the people of the region in the impact area is analyzed. David Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" will be the leading theoretical framework at the outset. Thirdly, an analysis of how the project will affect the reproduction of urban space from the perspective of urban political ecology follows.

2.2. Unequal Power Dynamics in Istanbul

The start of efforts to put the city in a position to compete with other global megacities and the strengthening of the municipal authority and cooperation with the private sector through amended laws are the results of the introduction of neoliberalism to the city. By neoliberalism, I am referring to the political economic changes that can be interpreted broadly as a move from state centric planning and welfare policies to a "market knows the best approach". The first liberalization of the

city took place in the early 1980s during the mayoralty of Bedrettin Dalan (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008). In the 2000s, the AKP municipality's neoliberal interventions in the city were further consolidated and the living conditions of the urban poor became more difficult especially due to the aggressive urban transformation and rehabilitation projects in the city that became more “marketable” over the years.

Istanbul has received internal migration since the 1950s. Migrants from rural areas, especially those who arrived in the 60s and 70s, found the solution in squatting, as their most central need, namely shelter, wasn’t taken care of by the state, letting the migrants squat nothwithstanding. This was marginalized under the discourse of "unplanned urbanization". Unplanned urbanization has always been on the agenda of politicians, and they have legitimized their investment projects and interventions in the city by basing them on correcting it. Interventions in the city took on the character of public-private cooperation and accelerated in the 80s and 90s. In the 2000s, this process shifted pace. Mega-projects emerged and urban transformation projects reached a peak. Especially the squatter neighborhoods and Kurdish-populated neighborhoods, which were touted as dangerous, became the victims of such projects (Yorucu, 2019).

Neoliberalization has also transformed the city's housing sector. The actors in the sector and the identity of investments have also changed. Moreover, the affiliation of MHA (TOKİ), the Mass Housing Development Administration, to the Prime Ministry means that a new actor, MHA, is involved in urban transformation projects in Istanbul. It has been actively involved in slum transformation projects. MHA was originally established to find a solution to the housing problems of the lower and middle-income group population. But with changes in the law, it can now cooperate with private construction companies and sell houses for a profit (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008). The change in MHA is the reflection of the change in legal apparatuses on the urban process. The city is now playing to global investors and slums or gypsy neighborhoods have been portrayed as disrupting the fabric of the city for this purpose. It has also been imposed that this population is dangerous. For example, the Ayazma (a squatter neighborhood built by the Kurds) and Tepeüstü neighborhoods have experienced urban transformation in a very harsh way. They

were displaced and relocated to the mass housing in Bezirganbahce built by MHA. Adapting to this settlement far from the center caused them to lose the habits of their old neighborhoods and life became difficult. They are also under strict surveillance. This situation can be summarized as urban captivity and social exclusion (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008).

Another example is the case of Sulukule. The Sulukule neighborhood was gypsy-populated, but they were displaced and condemned to live in public housing with the discourse of being dangerous for the city and disrupting the fabric. However, in fact, this population, which had migrated from way back in the Ottoman period, was actually a group that added color to the city and enriched the nightlife of the city, especially Taksim with their music. Forced to live on the outskirts of the city, this group had a very difficult time living in public housing and could not go to the center of the city to continue their work.

These examples show how these populations find it difficult to live in neoliberal Istanbul. This situation has been a struggle for existence for them. Informal working conditions have been created with neo-liberalization and most of them work without security. Working in harsh conditions and very low wages and living in urban captivity put them, namely the workers of the city, in a very difficult situation. While all this is happening, new wealth is seen rising in the city. Just as extreme poverty is a margin, extreme wealth is also a margin. In this case, the existence of gaping margins and the disconnection between them can be seen very clearly in Istanbul. In other words, there is high spatial segregation in Istanbul and with neoliberalism, this segregation continues to get broader. This duality is riveted with neoliberalism, and when these two states are studied together, it makes sense, to analyze neoliberalism (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008). The rise of new wealth and the examples of urban captivity and social exclusion are interdependent processes (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008, p. 9).

While there is the concept of urban captivity for the urban poor, there is the concept of a gated community for the rich of the city. This is also a kind of captivity, but there is no such thing as the urban poor live. Surveillance exists, but it is a matter of

their consent, while for the urban poor consent is out of the question. In terms of extreme wealth, numerous gated towns in Istanbul provide residence for very high-income groups such as Göktürk, Kemer Country, Beykoz Konakları, etc. The groups living in these settlements, which are far from the city center and protected from the "dangers" of the city, have very high consumption habits; but the consumption areas are either in these closed gated towns or in places very close to them or a few shopping malls that appeal to the expensive segment. The city center and chaos are not for them. They prefer to be away from the crowd of the city anyway.

Families living here are very close to each other and family dynamics draw a general pattern. Children attend a private school, where their neighbor's children attend as well. Grocery shopping is done on the site, there is a dependency on the car. Everything is in order on this margin. They openly say that the center of the city is dangerous (Candan & Kolluoğlu, 2008). Their perspectives towards those other than themselves are biased and contain anxiety. One of the best examples of this case is Beykoz Mansions. Residents here are not only buying a home or living environment but also a lifestyle that demonstrates an elite way of life (Kurtuluş, 2016). Beykoz Mansions, located on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, are surrounded by squatters. The urban polarization can be seen here since the gated mansions have strong security and those squatters are seen as dangerous.

Due to Hatice Kurtuluş's work on this gated community, it is possible to see how the residents of Beykoz Mansions perceive "the other". While the residents do not want to be involved with those who live in squatters, the squatter population, at first, was happy about the construction of these mansions since they thought they could find work there. However, they could not find what they expected because the people living in the mansions did not accept employees from the squatters. Also, the area where the mansions were built was a grove. Therefore, it was open to the public and most of the people from these slums went to this grove to engage with nature. However, they also lost their public entertainment as well. Kurtuluş analyzed this situation and revealed that such closed settlements are the result of the social surplus produced in Istanbul and are an example of renting with public resources (Kurtuluş, 2016). Kurtulus states that the inhabitants of these areas are unrelated to the

neighboring settlements, have nothing to do with the metropolis they live in, and do not share the same agenda (2016).

In short, the examples of both Ayazma and Tepeüstü urban transformation projects and Beykoz mansions show a polarized urban context. Both of them are inherent in neoliberalism. In terms of power dynamics, while the urban elite has power, the urban poor have the slightest sense of power. For example, the people of Ayazma and Tepeüstü tried to protest against the urban transformation projects through legal means; but they were not taken seriously (Yalçıntan et. al, 2019).

However, the needs of the rich urbanites are met more quickly and they have more access rights, they live the decentness they bought, but there is no decentness for the urban poor. They are stigmatized and have limited access to resources. This is completely at odds with Lefebvre's right to the city concept. According to the concept of the right to the city, everyone living in the city has a right to the city and everyone who will change the city and shape the city. The city is an area of play and joyfulness, but in the case of Istanbul, the city is not an example of this, due to the lack of infrastructure, overpopulation, the harsh neoliberal class conflicts, and the aforementioned polarization.

2.3. How Would the Population Living in the Impact Area of the Project likely to be Influenced?

The neighborhoods in the impact area are Ağaçlı, Yeniköy, Karaburun, Durusu, Balaban, Tayakadın, Baklalı, and Dursunköy. The general characteristics of these neighborhoods are that the first inhabitants were Muhajir immigrants and they received very little foreign migration, except Balaban. The inhabitants of these neighborhoods have been of Muhajir origin for generations, and they make their living from agriculture and animal husbandry and are closely tied to their socio-natural environment. The communities in the impact area, deeply entrenched in their more rural and traditional ways of life, face a bleak future as the implementation of the project approaches (Baysal, 2022). The shift away from agriculture and animal husbandry is not merely a change in occupation but a severance from generational

livelihoods. The inability to engage in these activities in new settlements leaves them unemployed, stripping away not only their jobs but also their sense of purpose and connection to the land. The residents stand to lose more than just their livelihoods; they face the imminent loss of the natural environment they depend on. The destruction of landscapes and ecosystems will sever the ties that these communities have nurtured for generations. Furthermore, the disturbance caused by the potential loss of cemeteries amplifies social injustice, as it infringes upon the sacred symbols that hold cultural significance (Baysal, 2022).

The Yenisehir project, rather than fostering inclusivity, is likely to exacerbate societal divisions and polarizations. The emergence of a high elite class is fueled by the exploitation of those earning less and serving others. Land speculation and increased property values, driven by real estate agents' promotional campaigns, indicate a shift towards exclusive, gated communities, further deepening social disparities. The envisioned "smart" city in Yenisehir comes at the cost of urban polarization. The creation of boundaries around residences and difficult access to the financial and cultural center would likely reinforce social divisions. The planned connection of Ispartakule to a train line is overshadowed by its physical isolation from the city center, that may perpetuate inequalities in transportation and urban accessibility.

2.4. A Critical Reading of Social Impact Assessment Report

The 36th annex of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA) is the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) section, which has been added to complete the EIA report. SIA studies consist of 4 main parts:

- Secondary data collection
- Preliminary site visit
- Socio-economic baseline survey fieldwork
- Data analysis and impact assessment and reporting.

Quantitative and qualitative data were used to identify the potential positive and negative impacts of the project, the impacted groups, the level of impacts, and who

will be affected and how. As a result of the studies, recommendations were made to increase the positive effects of identified impacts and to eliminate or mitigate the negative effects. These recommendations focus on reducing the number of people to be affected and compensating for negative impacts. Four plans were prepared as mitigation measures: a Local Community Safety Management Plan, a Community Relations Plan, a Traffic Management Plan, and an Employment and Training Plan. It was stated that the SIA and these plans were prepared to guide decision-makers. The main objective is to ensure that the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the population surrounding the project components are accurately presented. Thirty-one neighborhoods remain in the impact area. In particular, the route passes within 500-600 meters of Sazlıbosna, Dursunköy, Baklalı, Tayakadın, Terkos, and Durusu neighborhoods. The study area is divided into three main layers, one kilometer in the center and one kilometer to the right and left. Stratified sampling was used in strata totaling five kilometers. The below map presented in the SIA report shows the canal axis, EIA study area, settlements, neighborhood boundaries, and the three layers mentioned for the SIA.

As aforementioned, the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used together in the studies. Primary and secondary data were collected and a preliminary study was conducted. The purpose of the preliminary study is to get to know the population living in the project area. A literature review was conducted on the population of the remaining settlements in the study area and the results of the review were used as secondary data. A preliminary field visit to the settlements was then organized and primary data was collected. Within the scope of secondary data, the socio-economic profile, demographic, and cultural structure of the population living in the impact area was evaluated. The secondary data collected was used to assess how neighborhoods will be affected by housing expropriation and resettlement; how they will be affected by land expropriation that will affect livelihoods; and how communal areas will be affected. The primary data obtained as a result of the preliminary field visit was used to conduct qualitative and quantitative research following the social structure in the region (SIA, 2018).

Interviews with mukhtars during the preliminary field visit collected information on the demographic structure of the settlements, household characteristics, livelihoods,

infrastructure, access to services, presence of vulnerable groups, and their expectations and concerns about the project (SIA, 2018, p.8). The primary data obtained were then evaluated together with the secondary data obtained from the literature review, and qualitative and quantitative research preparations were initiated. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were organized as qualitative research. In quantitative research, household and mukhtar surveys were conducted. Focus group discussions were conducted with disadvantaged groups likely to be negatively affected by the project, such as fishers, farmers, and women. In-depth interviews were conducted with institutions, organizations, and civil society organizations.

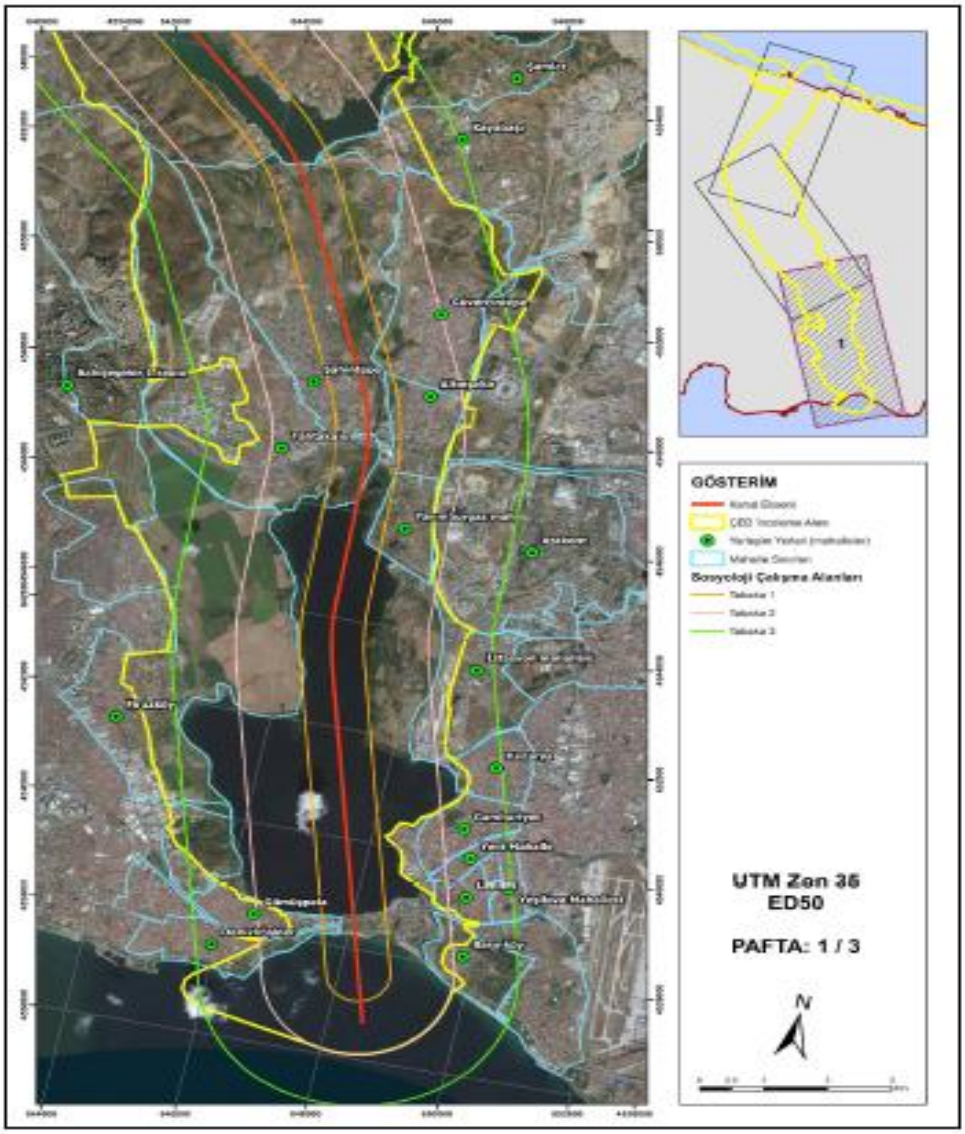

Figure 2. 1. Impact Areas of Social Impact Assessment (EIA 36th Annex, 2020, p.6)

The questionnaires prepared for the quantitative research consisted of two different types of questionnaires: mukhtars and household questionnaires. The household sample consisted of 1300 people and a research company was contracted to administer the questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). These data were then evaluated together with the data from qualitative research and an impact analysis was prepared. In line with the results of the impact analysis, recommendations were prepared to improve the positive impacts and to "minimize", "eliminate", "compensate" and "minimize the number of people to be affected" the negative impacts. However, how can social impact be reduced, and how can this problem be operationalized? These questions reveal that there is a problem with the proposed solutions which are going to be examined below.

The assessment of impacts was evaluated by region, duration, and magnitude of severity. Potential social impacts in the impact areas during the pre-construction, construction, and post-construction phases are categorized as follows:

- Impacts on population and demographic structure
- Community health and safety
- Impacts on the economic structure
- Impacts on infrastructure
- Impacts on lifestyle
- Impacts on access to and use of natural resources
- Impacts on tangible and intangible cultural heritage
- Impacts on vulnerable groups

The report explicitly addresses negative impacts, and implicitly acknowledges that the negative impacts would likely outweigh the positive impacts. The duration of the negative impacts is often long term and the severity of these impacts is likely to be very high.

A quick look at the report and its highly telling tables reveal that there will be serious impacts on the population who lives in the impact areas. These impacts, as acknowledged by the report, are mostly negative and they will end in the loss of their

livelihoods, their social and cultural life, and their living standards. During the construction phase, they will be under serious pressure in terms of negative impacts such as threats to public health and danger to life safety. The possibility of accidents during construction is high and the fact that foreign construction workers will be employed often makes the population living in the impact areas uneasy. The positive impact was explained solely in terms of economic parameters, arguing that the construction of the Canal Istanbul and the Yenisehir project would create employment opportunities. It is considered as a positive impact on the development of the country; however, in the same economic section, it is stated that the local population will permanently lose their livelihoods because the majority of this population is agricultural and livestock farmers and they are not able to change their livelihoods and do another job due to their age and educational status. In other words, they are not able to engage in any other occupation other than the agriculture and livestock sectors. In this context, an analysis from the urban political ecology perspective is crucial for this case. While the big corporations and the upper-income groups are benefiting, the most real locals of the area are forced to lose their livelihoods and displacement.

In the report, possible solutions were presented. Solutions are recommendations to prevent or mitigate potential negative impacts. These recommendations often include plans that need to be prepared. For example, a Public Relations Plan, Resettlement Action Plan, etc. However, whether these proposals are reasonable or sufficient is a question since they remain superficial and inadequate in terms of how the social reality occurs in the impact areas.

Below are a few suggested solutions excerpted from the report (SIA, 36th Annex of EIA, 2020, p. 217):

- In the case of the provision of expropriation compensation and, if necessary, the implementation of resettlement practices, national legislation as well as the standards of international financial institutions (IFIs) should be taken into account immediately after the policy on expropriation and property regularization has been finalized, a detailed vertical termination should be carried out and a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) should be prepared before expropriation proceedings commence.

- Along with the RAP, a Livelihood Restoration Plan should also be prepared, taking into account the existence of vulnerable groups identified in the region, and strategies should be identified to ensure the continuation of livelihoods and/or generate alternative solutions.
- Additional work should be done for the identified vulnerable groups and methods of compensating for income losses should be developed.
- Establishing a grievance mechanism accessible to those who will be directly/indirectly affected by the Project and ensuring that the mechanism operates in accordance with the procedure.
- In order to ensure the continuity of agricultural production and animal husbandry throughout the province, it is recommended to develop facilities and shift these activities to alternative areas.
- In order to compensate for the loss of common areas such as meadows, pastures, and forests, alternative uses should be identified in consultation with the users of these areas.
- Measures to prevent the loss of employment in agriculture and animal husbandry should be developed and planned by relevant institutions and organizations and put into practice. For example, the loss of employment in these sectors can be prevented by providing alternative agriculture and pastures instead of lost agricultural lands and pasture areas, or pasture areas that have been destroyed throughout can be rehabilitated and opened for use.
- Relevant plans such as Local Community Safety Management Plan, Traffic Management Plan, Community Relations Plan, etc. will be prepared by the contractors and all project activities will be carried out in accordance with these plans.
- Monitoring should be carried out on a regular basis to track whether the commitments in the contractor plans are being met.
- Ensure the establishment and proper functioning of a grievance mechanism that is accessible to those who will be directly affected by the project.
- The use of transport routes to settlements should be minimized and gateways should be opened for the project.

- In cases where the transportation routes of settlements need to be used, vehicle tracking systems should be installed to check whether the project vehicles comply with traffic rules, in particular, to ensure that personnel who do not comply with the rules when passing through settlements are warned. Care should be taken not to use these roads at night and very early in the day. Locations around the project should be informed in advance about construction activities that may cause noise and vibration, such as blasting, and necessary precautions should be taken.

These points are only suggestions, and many experts have stated that they are not realistic. Expert opinions will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

2.5. An Urban Political Ecological Analysis of the Effects of the Project on the Reproduction of Urban Life

It is part of my main argument that, if implemented, The Canal Istanbul Project would very likely to jeopardize the social and ecological life of the city that would give way to an important social and ecological reproduction problem. Cities and socio-natural ecological systems are interconnected systems in complex ways. As Swyngedouw argues, the city is a process within socio-environmental metabolisms. In this context, the urban-ecological nexus includes natural resource use, biodiversity, air quality, energy consumption, and many other factors. These factors are not independent of socio-power relations. In other words, power is not a concept only related to human actors. What is necessary and what is taught by the urban political ecology perspective is to look beyond the human/non-human dilemma. In the urban political ecology perspective, power relations are analyzed not only in terms of human actors but also in terms of non-humans. Power relations are experienced as a process of mediation on the part of non-humans as well as between humans (Zimmer, 2010, p. 349). In my theoretical discussion, I mentioned that the dichotomic and anthropocentric understanding towards human and non-human socio-ecological relations is highly problematic. Therefore, when an analysis of urban phenomena is conducted, it is important to remember that nature cannot be divided from social phenomena. In this situation, analysis of urban uneven development and

relations that flow from it must consist of non-human notions of the urban environment as well. In this context, how the project will affect urban life should also be considered from an ecological perspective. Flora and fauna are also part of urban life and for them, too, there is likely to be a problem of socio-natural space reproduction as well.

Ecological analysis is discussed here in two interrelated contexts. The first deals with the fundamental social needs such as food and water, which are intrinsic to urban life and vital for humans. The second context is the analysis of the project that will change the urban space and its ecology at the non-human level such as flora, fauna, and the Turkish Straits System. Although this level is categorized as non-human, it is intrinsic to social reproduction of urban life. It is connected to the first context because the ecosystem is a whole, as mentioned above that they are also intrinsic elements to the reproduction of urban space and urban life.

The socio-ecological aspects of the project should be considered in conjunction with other mega-projects such as the third bridge, the third airport, and the Northern Marmara Motorway, as they are integrated projects. The spheres of influence of these projects intersect with each other and ecological damage caused by one of them is included in the planning of the other project. For example, the felling of trees from the Northern Forests and the creation of space for the third airport intersect with the plans for the Canal Istanbul Project, as there is a logistical objective to have the container port at the Northern exit of the canal close to this airport.

Menteşe and Tezer (2021) showed in their study that the Northern Marmara Motorway and the third airport were built in a region covering ninety percent of the natural areas in the region that had broad-leaved forests, mixed forests, pastures, and grasslands. With the construction of these projects, approximately 8700 hectares of natural area have been lost. The Northern Marmara Motorway plays a role of 4700 hectares and Istanbul Airport 4000 hectares in this loss (Menteşe & Tezer, 2021). As a result of these losses, these areas have been reproduced as construction sites, industrial areas, commercial areas, and roads since 2018. The area planned for Canal Istanbul is approximately 11,200 hectares, the majority of which is agricultural land

and the remaining minority areas are pastures, wetlands, coasts, and dune areas (Menteşe & Tezer, 2021). Residential areas are planned as the majority of the project plans. A new university, shopping centers, schools, hospitals, hospitals, and workplaces are envisioned and located in the plans. To be brief, a total urbanization of an socio-ecological area that is free from settlement and urban fabric is part of the Canal Istanbul Project.

The low-density, mid-density, commercial, and residential areas constitute approximately forty-four percent of Canal Istanbul Plans. In Figure 3.1., the first phase of the project shows the plan for the Arnavutköy district. The neighborhoods in Arnavutköy district (especially Baklalı, Boğazköy, Durusu, Dursunköy, Baklalı, Tayakadın, Karaburun, and Yeniköy neighborhoods) will be the most affected ones by the implementation of the Plan. As aforementioned, agriculture is the dominant means of livelihood in these places, except for Karaburun, which relies more on fishing. In this case, agricultural areas will be the most affected by the project (Menteşe & Tezer, 2021) due to the complete urbanization of the area is planned.

2.5.1. Impact of the Project on Istanbul's Food Supply

The decline in Istanbul's agricultural areas may not bring a noticeable food crisis into the picture as an historical metropolitan area that has been dependent to its hinterlands for food and to the long distance food trade for centuries. However, the rural population in the aforementioned areas will most likely be displaced and their livelihoods will be jeopardized. But at a larger scale when we take into account the additional 1.2 million population to be added due to the Yenişehir project will likely create serious socio-ecological problems.

When it comes to agriculture, animal husbandry also comes with it. The pasture areas in the project impact area, which will disappear, are 119,340 decares in total and the meadow areas are 4,470 decares in size. If animal husbandry production suffers, Istanbul will find it even more difficult to meet its needs for meat, milk, and eggs. There are approximately 2,500 buffaloes on the route of the canal and with the impact area, seventy-five percent of the buffalo population is under threat (Aysu, 2022).

2.5.2. Fresh Water Supply and the Potential Impact of the Project

When it comes to Canal Istanbul, it is essential to address the issue of water. In this context, drinking water must be addressed. Istanbul's water reserves are limited and for this reason, water basins are one of the elements that should be protected according to the 2009 1/100.000 scale master plan (WWF, 2018). The water used in Istanbul comes from sources located in other provinces, e.g. Melen River. 72.4 percent of the water demand is supplied from dams and water basins close to Istanbul. There are seven drinking water basins close to the city: Büyükçekmece, Terkos, Alibeyköy, Sazlıdere, Ömerli, Elmalı, and Darlık (WWF, 2018). The maximum water accumulation volume of the dams is 868 million cubic meters. One of the most important dams, the Sazlıdere Dam, will be canceled due to the project and its maximum water storage volume is 88 million cubic meters (Aysu, 2022). The project will also negatively affect the Terkos Dam. Any leakage into Terkos means deterioration of water quality. While Istanbul is barely self-sufficient in terms of water, especially on the European side, the prospective project would be again an intervention in meeting the most basic need for water.

In short, Istanbul is facing a crisis in terms of food and drinking water and the priority should be to solve these problems. The Canal Istanbul Project is destroying the agricultural lands of Istanbul, which is already dependent on imports for food, and reinforcing food inflation. As for water, thirst is a very serious problem and the project will exacerbate the water crisis. The destruction of the Sazlıdere Dam will put the European Side, which is already in a difficult situation in terms of water, in an even more difficult situation.

2.5.3. Impacts on Flora of Istanbul

In this section, the forests and endemic plants of Istanbul will be discussed. Istanbul Forests are ecological corridors connecting the flora of Europe and Anatolia. They are critical for the city by sequestering carbon. They are a precious tree wealth and home to a rich biodiversity (WWF, 2018). They are extremely important for the protection and sustainability of water basins. They ensure the continuity of wildlife.

The winds blowing from the north, through the fresh air in the forests, drift the fresh air and refresh the air of the city (WWF, 2018).

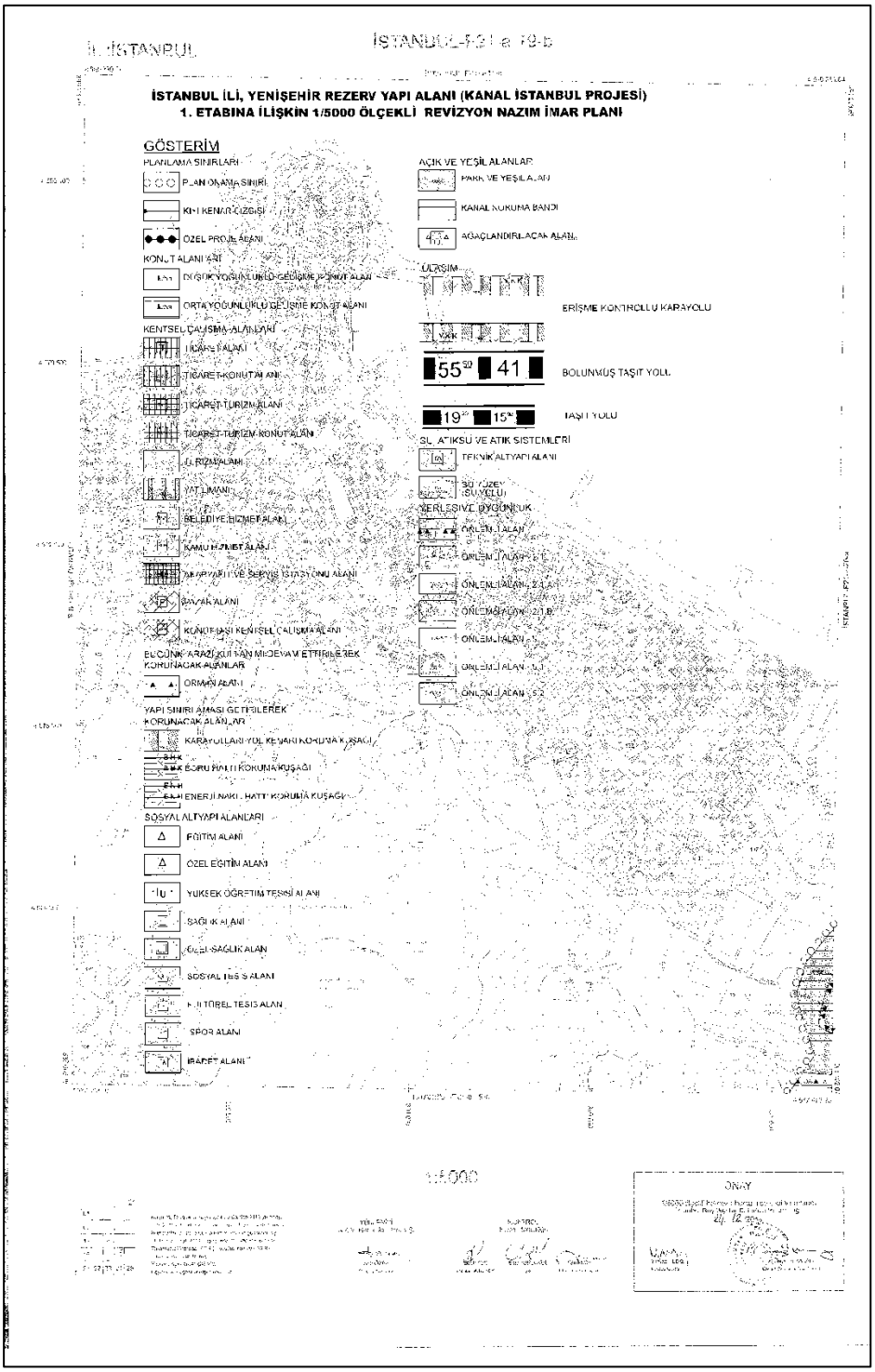

Figure 2. 2. 1/5000 Scale Revision Master Plan for Istanbul Province, Yenişehir Reserve Building Area Phase 1[3]

[3] The plans of Canal Istanbul are not available as open source on the Internet. I first wrote to the Spatial Justice Association to get the plans, but they stated that they had received the plans from

Forests in Istanbul are concentrated in the north of the city on the Anatolian and European sides. Leafy tree species are predominant: Oak, beech, hornbeam, hornbeam, chestnut, linden, willow, alder, and maple (WWF, 2018). In terms of soils, they are located on low-acid clay soils and have developed a vegetation cover dominated by heather and heathland (WWF, 2018). Since Istanbul has a Black Sea climate close to the Black Sea, the forests on the Black Sea side are dominated by leafy species, while the southern parts of the city, which are under the influence of the Sea of Marmara, are dominated by maquis type plant that are communities characteristic of the Mediterranean climate (WWF, 2018). Istanbul Forests are also an important bird migration concentration area. It hosts both raptors and songbirds during their migration periods (Kuzey Ormanları, n.d.). These birds prefer wetlands hosted by forests.

The endemic plants of Istanbul are discussed under the names of heathlands, meadows, and pastures. Shrublands are habitats consisting of shrubs and heaths shorter than two meters (WWF, 2018). In Istanbul, they are more common on the European side. Istanbul's heathlands, like its forests, are rich in biodiversity. Heaths occur in rare climatic conditions and are therefore rich in endemic species (WWF, 2018). There are international conventions that ensure the protection of endemic species: the Bern Convention, Barcelona Convention, and the European Union Habitats Directive. Türkiye has signed these conventions. These conventions contain strict provisions and have developed strict policies to protect rare and endemic species that are likely to live only in a particular region (WWF, 2018).

The heathlands with endemic plants on the European side are around Çilingöz and Kasatura and contain many endemic larch communities (WWF, 2018). As for meadows and pastures, the structure of Istanbul's pastures is limestone and rich in flowers, harboring rare plant and insect species (WWF, 2018). Gümüşpınar-Pınarca meadow and pasture areas are the most important areas. It is home to juniper communities cut by deep valleys on the Gürpınar formation (WWF, 2018).

Ülgen Şendil from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and that it would be better to ask her. I reached Ülgen Şendil and she forwarded the plans to me.

2.5.4. Impacts on the Fauna of Istanbul

The area around Terkos Lake is one of the remaining natural habitats of Istanbul in terms of biodiversity and is one of Turkey's Important Natural Areas. Mammal species such as the long-footed bat, and otter, and amphibians such as the red-footed frog are found in this area. Terkos Lake is home to more than 10,000 waterfowl, especially in winter, and is one of the important bird areas (WWF, 2018). Küçükçekmece Lake contains reeds and important breeding and wintering areas for waterbirds (WWF, 2018). During bird migrations, little cormorants and thousands of storks visit the area.

Mega projects, especially the New Airport and third bridge had a negative impact on the natural areas in the region. These projects deprived birds of their nesting and breeding grounds. Also, they have affected bird migration routes and important stations on these routes, negatively affecting bird species that need to be protected according to the Bern Convention.

In terms of the planned Canal Istanbul Project, the geographical structure of the Bosphorus separating the two peninsulas will change, creating a new corridor. The Bosphorus is an important transit point for bird migration routes (WWF, 2018). This project is going to have negative ecological impacts on both the migratory birds and the creatures living on the land mass, which turns into an island cut off from its surroundings. This may include adaptation difficulties and population losses, especially for bird species.

In other words, the planned Canal Istanbul Project will separate the European side of Istanbul from Thrace, creating an island in the middle surrounded by seas on all four sides, and this isolation will create a new situation for the various forms of wildlife in the region. It is inevitable that species that can move freely will not be able to adapt to the isolated island ecosystem or will likely disappear (WWF, 2018).

2.5.5. Impacts on the Turkish Straits System

The area of the Bosphorus opening into the Marmara Sea is of special importance in the Turkish Straits System because it hosts important physical and biochemical

processes that determine the basic cycles of the system. The fast and turbulent jet stream exiting the Bosphorus causes horizontal and vertical mixing in this area, resulting in the interaction of natural and artificial substances between layers and horizontally. These interactions cause the waters of neighboring seas to interact intensively. Biological production in the surface layer of nutrient-rich waters from the Black Sea in the eastern basin increases under the jet effect. This leads to greater changes in terms of organic matter deposition and oxygen consumption in the deep substrate waters than in the western and mid-depth regions of the Sea of Marmara.

In the Bosphorus, there are two very important currents that pass in two layers one below the other (WWF, 2018). As the upper and lower layer waters flow in opposite directions, they mix with each other due to shear stress and turbulence over the distance they travel, exchanging water, heat, and matter in the process. These mixing mechanisms change along the paths of two water masses originating from different seas, with the most rapid change occurring in the shallow Istanbul and Dardanelles Straits (WWF). In the Sea of Marmara, the presence of large water masses and wind effects cause large amounts of transfers between layers (WWF, 2018).

The Turkish Straits System has the largest continental shelf in the country and has a unique value for the life cycle of marine species (WWF, 2018). Fishing and maritime trade have played an economically important role in this region throughout history. The Sea of Marmara has a shallow depth and has a structure where the upper layer of waters originating from the Black Sea along the Turkish Straits System resist homogenization (WWF, 2018). This stratification structure offers great production potential by retaining nutrients, but can also lead to oxygen depletion.

The opening of Canal Istanbul means adding a water source the size of the Sakarya River to the Marmara Sea (WWF, 2018). It could negatively impact Marmara by carrying Black Sea coastal waters. This could exacerbate existing problems in the Marmara such as mucilage and rock-slip. It should also be emphasized that changes in the water budget of the Black Sea could affect the climatic dynamics of the Black Sea in the long term and affect sensitive ecosystems. The Black Sea is already facing an ecosystem imbalance experiencing eutrophication, which can lead to seafood collapses and ecosystem shifts (WWF, 2018).

2.6. Conclusion

The Canal Istanbul Project will have serious socio-ecological consequences. Mostly, it will likely to have negative consequences. It will negatively affect the reproduction of urban life and will reinforce social injustices in the city. It will restrict equitable access to basic needs of food and water. Moreover, the non-human elements that are part of the city also deserve to live justly, and the Canal Istanbul Project ignores their right to do so. It would not be wrong to say that Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession can also apply to non-human wildlife because various species will either likely to be displaced from their habitats lose the conditions of their existence for the sake of profit and the growth of accumulation.

Moreover, we also have to underline the fact that—as the ecosystems do not really care much about national borders—many of the aspects discussed above are either international or regional beyond the scale of the Turkish nation-state indirectly, such as the inconveniences to migratory bird species that cover Europe to Africa, or directly in terms of the structural and irreversible marine ecosystem transformations of Black Sea, Marmara Sea and even to the Mediterranean all the way to the Gibraltar.

Although the international and the regional repercussions of the Project in terms of political, economic and ecological transformations is outside the scope of this dissertation, we must keep them in mind while keeping on our discussion on how important the proposed Canal Istanbul project is vis-à-vis the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERTS' AND NGO'S VIEWS ABOUT THE PROJECT

In this part of the thesis, the political positions and publicized opinions and positions of experts and NGOs towards the project will be analyzed. The analysis consists of three main groups: Analysis of the Canal Istanbul Workshop organized by Greater Istanbul Municipality (hereafter IBB) on January 10, 2020; Analysis of the report prepared by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, Chamber of Environmental Engineers Istanbul Branch; and Analysis of the report titled Either Canal or Istanbul prepared by the NGO, World Wildlife Fund (WFF). A literature review was used as a method and views from the workshop and reports were summarized and presented.

3.1. Canal Istanbul Workshop

In this section, the opinions of the experts participating in the workshop will be summarized into seven groups: Economics, planning, ecology, legal framework, earthquake risk, archaeological heritage, and social aspects. The workshop offers a holistic picture of seven themes. The workshop, which was attended by 2,658 people, 253 of whom were academics and students, constitutes the scientific basis of the anti-theses presented against the Canal Istanbul Project (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). In the report prepared after the workshop, the aim of the workshop was stated as ensuring the participation of citizens in decision-making processes regarding the project and opening the project to a comprehensive discussion in all its aspects.

3.1.1. Economics

In the first session on the political economy of Canal Istanbul, the economic viability of the project was discussed. Cigdem Toker, a journalist, and author, notes that there

is a contradiction in the project's investment cost calculations. For example, the cost of the project is shown as 75 billion Turkish liras in the official document and 118 billion Turkish liras in the report of the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs, and Communications. Toker says this is very inconvenient and the cost calculation is unclear. Toker also mentioned that if the project is not built through build-operate-transfer, it will be funded from the national budget. The project is also envisaged to be built on a build-lease-transfer model. This is because the project's operating revenues are lower than its cost. Toker also says that it is difficult to monetize benefits and costs because some costs, such as those related to ecology or health, are not easy to estimate. In this case, Toker says, the project should not be rushed.

Prof. Dr. Haluk Levent from Bilgi University's Department of Business Administration adds to Toker's points by pointing to the lack of a feasibility report. In this case, he says, it would be invalid to make an economic assessment. Levent said that there is no valid reason for the project because the number of ships passing through the strait has gradually decreased in the last 10 years. He says that the reason for insisting on the construction of Canal Istanbul is to create a new rent. He says that Canal Istanbul is a case of confiscating publicly generated rent and that this is common in countries like Turkey, and even constitutes the economic background of authoritarian populist governments (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). He pointed out that this type of rent generation leads to the reinforcement of numerous ecological, economic, and social problems.

3.1.2. Planning

Prof. Dr. Haluk Gercek, a retired lecturer at Istanbul Technical University and a transportation expert, starts his speech by asking "Is the ship traffic in the Bosphorus really increasing?" and states that the ship traffic in the Bosphorus has been decreasing since 2007. There is no scientific validity to the claim that the ship traffic projected in the project's EIA Report will increase to 86,000 in 2071, says Gerçek. Another justification for the Canal Istanbul Project is to prevent ship accidents in the Bosphorus. However, Gerçek states that ship accidents have also decreased. Another participant, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Vefik Alp, a high architect and engineer, says he has

been against the project since day one. He says the priorities for Istanbul should be limiting the population, preparing the city for earthquakes by transforming the rotten and distorted building stock, streamlining transportation, and preparing the city against climate change (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020).

Representing the Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects of Turkey, Chamber of City Planners, Istanbul Branch, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pelin Pınar Giritlioglu started her speech with the definition of the planning and reserve building areas specified in the Canal Istanbul Project. She stated that the main purpose of reserve building areas is to create new settlement areas to prevent disaster risk. He then mentioned that with the Yenisehir project, eight forest villages will lose their quality and the areas in the impact area will suffer ecological damage. He emphasized the following: This project contradicts the decisions of the upper-scale plan and is, therefore, an unlawful project; the proposed plan is a plan that usurps the city's rights to water and life; no new security measures will be taken in the planned canal; this project is a real estate project; the costs of urban service costs on the public will increase; this project is a project that does not consider the public interest; it is not included in the 1/100. 000 scale plan of 2009; it does not take disaster risk into account and does not protect the ecological balance; it is a project that will consume the city's resources; the Northern Forests must be protected; the project has no sound economic justification; the project will cause dispossession and displacement (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020).

Another participant, Prof. Dr. Sevkiye Sence Türk who is a lecturer at Istanbul Technical University, in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, states that there is a dilemma. Reserve building areas are determined according to Law 6306 and this area consists of 42 thousand hectares: Which of the Canal Istanbul Project and the Yenisehir Project causes the formation of the other? He then opens his views on the two projects. He states that 60 percent of the agricultural areas will be opened to construction with the housing areas to be built. He says that this situation contradicts the upper-scale plans, because in these plans, the sub-centers are planned to move along the east-west axis, and with Canal Istanbul, the north of Istanbul is being opened for development. This project will divide Istanbul into three parts and disrupt the integrity of both the natural structure and the built environment.

3.1.3. Ecology

Prof. Dr. Cemal Saydam from Hacettepe University's Department of Environmental Engineering says that the Marmara Sea is already in a bad state and is in danger of extinction. He compares the Marmara Sea to a child with asthma, because the amount of oxygen in the sea does not allow it to live in a healthy way. In this case, he says, interventions from outside will affect Marmara even worse. He says that the Marmara Sea can no longer handle the loads coming from outside and states that the sea will be deprived of oxygen due to the destruction that will occur in Sazlıdere and Küçükçekmece lakes. In the face of the load loaded to the sea, Marmara will continue to break down organic matter using oxygen, and since there will not be enough oxygen, oxygen will be taken from sulfate and H2S gas will remain, Saydam says. He states that this gas will give off a rotten egg smell and says that once it occurs, there is no going back. This odor adversely affects human health and this project should not be undertaken because it is irreversible.

Derin Orhon, another professor, says that the Black Sea and the western region is a very polluted environment and that the canal will discharge this pollution into the shallowest and most sensitive region of Marmara. He says that this pollution load is calculated as the equivalent of 2 million people and as Saydam says, this will deplete the dissolved oxygen in the Marmara Sea. He then mentions that the shores of the canal will be opened to settlements. He says that the region cannot be prevented from attracting two million inhabitants and states that this situation is contrary to the 1/100.000 scale Environmental Plan adopted in 2009. Another issue is the excavation. Orhon says that two billion excavation wastes will be generated from the canal construction. Moreover, the important issue here is what will be done with this waste. Orhon says that the current legislation prohibits the dumping of excavation waste into the sea and filling it (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). But the project plans to fill in the Black Sea coast, which Orhon says will be an ecological devastation.

Doganay Tolunay, a professor at Istanbul University's Cerrahpasa Faculty of Forestry, notes that the EIA report states that 201,000 trees will be cut down, and then says that this number does not include trees with a breast height of 130 cm and a

diameter of less than 8 cm (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). When these are included, the number of trees to be felled reaches 428 hectares of forest area, some of which is the Terkos Sand Dune afforestation, which has conservation forest status, Tolunay said. However, he points out that although these forests fall under the highest category of nature protection, this is not taken into account at all. Tolunay also touches on the issue of global warming, because deforestation is a cause of global warming. The land change caused by the canal will emit 700,000 tons of carbon dioxide and the EIA report incorrectly and incompletely calculates deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, Tolunay says. He also touches on another issue, water consumption. He says Istanbul's annual water need will increase to 1.8 billion cubic meters and if the Melen dam is not built, Istanbul will suffer from shortages. He also mentions that the flora and fauna information given in the EIA Report is incorrect.

Selahattin Beyaz, who participated in the workshop representing the Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects of Türkiye, Chamber of Environmental Engineers Istanbul Branch, stated that considering the annual yield of the catchment areas of Terkos Lake and Sazlıdere dam, Sazlıdere dam is the most efficient basin in terms of water holding capacity. However, he also states that: With the Canal Istanbul project, the dam will lose about sixty percent of its capacity (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). This corresponds to eight percent of the European Side's water needs and is a very important value, says Beyaz. Moreover, the complete decommissioning of the dam means that the system that meets the water needs of Istanbul's 5 million inhabitants will be disabled, and this is not an acceptable situation, says Beyaz.

3.1.4. Legal Framework

Lawyer Mehmet Durakoğlu, Chairman of the Istanbul Bar Association, argues that it is objectionable for Canal Istanbul to even bring the Montreux Convention into the discussion, noting that thanks to this convention, Turkey has played a major role in making the Black Sea a sea of peace (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). Furthermore, when considered in terms of crime and punishment, Durakoğlu underlines that this

project is a crime against the city and violates urban rights. In addition, the amendment to the Environmental Plan violates Article 56 of the Constitution. Dr. Rıza Türmen, another jurist and ambassador who attended the workshop, agrees with Durakoğlu and says that the sovereign rights of the Republic of Turkey are integrated with Montreux. If this convention expires, the transit regime will apply and if this happens, coastal states will have no authority, Türmen says. He also refers to the passage of ships through the Bosphorus and underlines the question of why ships would prefer to pass through the canal when it is free and cheap to pass through the Bosphorus. In addition to what Durakoğlu said, he also mentioned the violation of the right to a healthy environment in Article 56 and the public interest principle in Article 43 of the Constitution.

3.1.5. Earthquake Risk

Haluk Eyidogan, a retired lecturer at the Geophysical Engineering Department of Istanbul Technical University, says that while the Canal Istanbul Project has problems such as earthquake-related hazards, landslides, and liquefaction that may occur during and after construction, the project is still wanted to be built. In addition, the Marmara Sea poses a tsunami risk, but the EIA Report does not mention tsunamis, says Eyidogan (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). The report also fails to mention that there are three active faults in the project area, which are secondary faults. Despite these risks, and for a city that expects an earthquake within 30 years, Eyidogan says it is illogical to build a city around the canal and to accumulate more population and buildings. He also underlines that with the resources that will be consumed for this project, the loss of life caused by the earthquake can be reduced and Istanbul can become a safer megacity (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020).

Prof. Dr. Naci Görür, Professor of Geological Engineering at Istanbul Technical University and Founding Member of the Academy of Science in the Department of Geological Engineering, underlines that the canal will not trigger an earthquake, but the earthquake will affect the canal very seriously (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). In addition to what Eyidogan said, Görür states that the part of the canal between Kücükcekmece and the Marmara Sea is the weakest link and will be affected by the

expected earthquake with a magnitude of at least 9 (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). There is also weak ground at the entrance to the Black Sea. It is obvious that there will be very serious damage in these areas during an earthquake.

3.1.6. Archeological Heritage

Yiğit Ozar, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Istanbul Branch of the Archaeologists' Association, says that the Canal Istanbul Project is being carried out in areas where there are very important archaeological remains, and the canal route is archaeologically very diverse, starting from prehistoric times (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). Ozar says that there are very valuable historical remains in the region. Contrary to what is stated in the EIA Report, he says, it is not possible to describe the project's impact on the region as low-scale (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). For example, Yarımburgaz Cave, which is critical for the spread of the first humans, will be severely negatively affected if the canal is built, Ozar says.

3.1.7. Social Aspects

Prof. Ayfer Bartu Candan from Boğazici Sociology Department states that it is important to create opportunities for public debate on the project and that the discussions on the EIA Report are insufficient for the social and sociological impacts of the project (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). In the following, she mentions the SIA annex and draws attention to the following: While the SIA annex is included in international legislation, it is not included in national legislation. The fact that this situation is not resolved makes the evaluation of the report in terms of its social consequences even more critical, says Candan (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). Candan also mentions the problems of the region and says that the report identifies potential problems, but does not show a solution and only makes wishes (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020).

Another participant, Bekir Agırdır, General Manager of KONDA Research and Consultancy Company, stated that society has bigger agendas instead of discussing the Canal Istanbul Project. For example, unemployment and the earthquake. In the

studies conducted by KONDA, ninety-eight percent of young people between the ages of 15 and 30 think that taking measures for earthquakes is a higher priority than Canal Istanbul (Canal Istanbul Workshop, 2020). Agırdır states that those who think that this project is necessary and beneficial are less than one-third of society.

3.2. The Report Prepared by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects Canal Istanbul and Yenisehir Project Technical Report 2

This is the most up-to-date report prepared by the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, Chamber of Environmental Engineers (CEE) Istanbul Branch. First of all, they consider the project as a political project and use the phrase of bringing the ecosystem into an area of capital accumulation. They raise the following questions: "Does the community want this project? Does capital want it? For whose needs and for what?". UCTEA CEE Istanbul Branch says that the answers to these questions clarify what the impacts of the project will be and under what conditions (UCTEA CEE Istanbul Branch, 2020). Following, the report examines the general patterns of mega projects. In line with the capitalist demands of mega projects, the government's feeding and meeting this demand is discussed. In addition, there is also a mention of the interest accruing to the circles close to the government (UCTEA CEE Istanbul Branch, 2020).

At this point, it is explained why the political power has turned to such projects: the most important reason is the financial crisis. The experts who prepared this report very briefly explained the reason for extreme kind of financial crises: the state, unable to tax the high-income capitalist class, has distanced itself from state-owned enterprises and no longer has the ability to borrow from other states; in addition, the political power needs to reproduce itself when faced with a resource crisis (UCTEA CEE Istanbul Branch, 2020). The report also states that political power uses the emphasis on development and feeds ideological pressure on the masses. Another criticism is that the project is being implemented through Public-Private Partnership. In this type of cooperation, the state shares the financial risks and profits of the project with the private sector. However, the report clearly states the following: In Public-Private Partnerships, the private sector only shares the profits; the public bears the risk (UCTEA CEE Istanbul Branch, 2020).

In another part of the report, it was mentioned that Canal Istanbul would cause ecological and social destruction and change the entire demographic structure of the region. They stated that causing such damage for the sake of rent is a crime and that they are responsible for the people living in the area, for life (UCTEA CEE, 2020). It is underlined that the process of the project was carried out unlawfully and that violence was inflicted on both living and non-living beings. In short, the experts who prepared the report stated that the consequences of the project would be irreversible and irreparably destructive (UCTEA CEE, 2020).

3.3. "Either Canal or Istanbul" Report Prepared by World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

In the report that was prepared in 2018, the Turkish Straits System, Istanbul's marine ecosystem, terrestrial ecosystem, and freshwater resources, as well as the socio-economic profile of the region have been comprehensively analyzed by experts in the field. First of all, the first idea they present is that Canal Istanbul is not just a big economic investment, but a project that needs to be examined from a social, political, environmental, and legal perspective and whose sustainability needs to be questioned. For WWF, taking the necessary measures to protect endangered flora and fauna and their natural habitats is a matter of utmost importance. Istanbul, especially the project area, has an endemic ecosystem in terms of flora and fauna. What the report envisages for Istanbul is not the further destruction of the city's last remaining natural areas. It emphasizes that natural areas should be passed on from generation to generation in a healthy way without losing value (WWF, 2018).

It was also underlined that with the world's excessive consumption of resources, especially water consumption, and the climate change agenda, it is urgent to manage water resources rationally, prevent water waste, and protect water basins very well (WWF, 2018). For example, the loss of the Sazlıdere Dam on the canal route will exacerbate the already existing drinking water scarcity agenda in Istanbul. According to the experts who prepared the report, this is a very serious problem. Another serious problem is that the canal will disrupt the two-layer system in the Turkish Straits System. According to experts, the explanations in the EIA Report are

insufficient. In particular, more use should be made of marine sciences and the physical changes that will occur in the sea (e.g. disappearance of the current regime, reduction in sea level differences, disruption of density stratification, reduction in the flow rates of rivers feeding the Black Sea, etc.) should be examined in more detail (WWF, 2018).

The report examines the socio-economic impacts of the project, following the treatment of physical and biological issues. Firstly, the cost-benefit analysis, which is the most commonly used analysis in the evaluation of such projects, is mentioned (WWF, 2018). In such an analysis pattern, all the pros and cons are expressed in monetary values, but the experts who prepared the report argue that monetary valuation is invalid or even impossible in the case of environmental values and human lives (WWF, 2018). Experts also note that there are uncertainties in the socio-economic assessments of the project; the facts are debatable, and the conflicts of values have resulted in a peak of interest and serious losses (WWF, 2018). In this case, they suggest the following: "precautionary principle". In other words, since there are no comprehensive scientific studies on the pros and cons that the project will create, the project should be treated with more caution and extra sensitivity.

In short, experts say that Istanbul cannot afford this project and that it will cause serious damage. In addition, there are international regulations (e.g. the Bern Treaty) that Turkey must comply with in the context of nature conservation, and this is frequently emphasized in the report, stating that the Canal Istanbul Project would be a violation of these regulations. Experts say that Turkey must comply with the principle of protecting ecosystems mentioned in these regulations. The need to preserve the integrity of ecosystems and ensure their sustainability is strongly emphasized (WWF, 2018).

3.4. The Canal Istanbul Project: A Mirror for the Political Regime of Türkiye?

In this section, scientists who support the project or are close to the government could have been examined, but the term "close to the government" indicates that biased views would have been conveyed. Such a transfer would contradict the objectivity of science. In fact, a comparison & contrast could have been made

between the opinions and reports of the aforementioned experts and the scientists supporting the project. However, this would be discussing the political conflict from another dimension, that of science. However, the purpose of this section is to present the views of experts and NGOs. It is obvious that the opposition scientists have no vested interest and therefore their views and scientific reports are more realistic. Most of them are prominent figures and work in prestigious organizations. Is it possible that it is a coincidence that all of these names are opposed?

Experts from each branch have made scientific explanations from their own disciplines and have taken it upon themselves to do so. Each opinion is cumulatively added to the other. The opinion of an expert should be considered together with the opinions of other experts and a holistic approach should be followed. As seen earlier in the thesis, ecology is not independent of society, and society is not independent of ecology. Therefore, the views of a sociologist are comprehensive when mentioned together with those of a geological engineer. Analyzing the Canal Istanbul Project brings these two branches closer together.

Experts, professional chambers, and NGOs have conducted extensive studies and argue that this project will bring destruction on every scale. The money to be spent on the project could be allocated to the real needs of society. Furthermore, experts point out that there are serious deficiencies in the EIA Report, and that the project will cause serious damage during construction and operation. Possible damages are mentioned in the EIA Report, but the recommendations are superficial. There will be material and moral damage to the ecosystem and financial damage as the income of the canal will be less than the expenses. Most of the experts here, all of them, are concerned and feel a sense of responsibility as scientists. In addition to the Canal Istanbul Workshop, UCTEA has also organized several panels. It is very valuable for scientists to come together in these panels and make common sense, and the more collective science is, the stronger it is. To conclude, only in unity can experts fight against a mega-project that has a sphere of influence that extends across the whole country.

Having discussed the positions of scientific community and the NGOs vis-à-vis their positions on the Canal Istanbul Project, it would be meaningful now to ask whether

the Canal Istanbul Project serves as an example of the top-down approach in the dominant political climate in Türkiye.

"Top-down" refers to an approach to analysis and research in political science that focuses on the policy-making processes of the state and central authorities. This perspective focuses on the influence of the state on society, emphasizing that policy usually originates from the top-level organs of the state, namely the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The top-down model argues that policy and decision-making processes are usually determined by elites and then the public is forced to comply with these policies. While this analysis focuses on a state-centered perspective, it emphasizes the role of elites in the policy-making process and generally adopts a model in which policy moves in a top-down direction.

The top-down approach is also a form of practice. In the research question for this section, the term is taken as a way of practice. How the planned project, Canal Istanbul, is being implemented and whether it is a case that exemplifies the regime in Turkey is the subject of this section. The proposed Canal Istanbul project has sparked a multi-faceted debate involving environmental impact assessments, social injustice, and economic consequences. One of the salient issues revolves around the inadequacy of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Social Impact Assessment reports. Corrections have not been sufficient despite objection lawsuits. The technical language of these reports makes them far from inclusive, making it difficult for the public to understand and participate. Local communities feel that their objections are not taken into account and that they are helpless in the face of decisions (Baysal, 2022).

Also, a review of expert opinions and the stance of environmental organizations such as WWF suggests that the project will likely to have scientifically negative consequences. The consensus among experts is that there are serious deficiencies in the EIA Report. Serious environmental and financial damages are expected and the sustainability of the canal is questioned, especially in terms of employment during the operation phase. The social justice aspect is evident when focusing on the impact on the urban poor. The population that will be displaced once the project is

completed is largely made up of individuals who rely heavily on agriculture and animal husbandry. Unemployment, increased poverty, and the possibility of losing their cemeteries, as an example of being victims of symbolic oppression, with the natural environment exemplify social injustice (Baysal, 2022).

The drive for economic profit seems to disregard the populations that will likely be displaced. Land speculation and the emergence of a new elite might contribute to reinforcing income inequality. The creation of a new financial and cultural hub in Yenisehir, coupled with transportation challenges, might further increase urban polarization in Istanbul. While the construction and operation phases promise employment opportunities, concerns about workers' occupational health and safety are not addressed.

If previous mega-projects and the poor safety conditions for the workers in the already implemented projects in Istanbul are of any indication, it is pretty difficult to expect pro-labor working conditions in a project as big and potentially dangerous as the planned Canal Istanbul Project. The more massive and complex construction activities become, the more important occupational health and safety issues may likely to become, as the expected number of occupational homicides increases. For instance, according to the *Cumhuriyet Newspaper*, at least 52 workers lost their lives in occupational homicides during the construction of the third airport ("How Many People Died at Istanbul Airport?", 2018). Moreover, hundreds of workers were maimed. A total of twenty-two inspections were organized for the construction of the airport: two scheduled inspections, three due to work accidents and seventeen due to complaints. As a result of the inspections, administrative fines were imposed on 74 contractors. In addition, workers organized protests against the unfavorable working conditions, but according to the newspaper editorial, these protests were suppressed by law enforcement officers. The example of the third airport raises the prospect of similar processes during the construction of the Canal Istanbul Project.

The project also threatens existing infrastructure and that might lead to the cancelation and costly rewiring of essential services, which could adversely affect the urban poor in particular. The idea of adding a large population to Istanbul, which

is not self-sufficient in food and water, as a result of the Yenişehir project shows that the seriousness of the situation is not being addressed. In particular, the earthquake issue is very serious. Istanbul is expecting an earthquake of approximately magnitude of 7 or higher. There are many civic groups that argue that the city needs to resolve these issues instead of a new mega project.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this dissertation was to render a sociological analysis of the Canal Istanbul Project, albeit the fact it is at the planning stage and has not been implemented, except a few infrastructural constructions here, or a road building there. This dissertation, in other words, was an attempt to initiate a sociology of a "mega-project planning" and the political struggle given at the public sphere by the pro-construction government and its supporters and allies and those who have resisted the Project for a variety of reasons. The fact that the Project is in its planning stage enabled the focus I tried to develop on the political struggle over the Project since the politics as such is most heated at the planning, and not at the execution stage. However, to develop a sociological analysis of a Project, which is not materially there proved to be very challenging, mostly due to the fact that my intention was to render an analysis of the political ecology of the Canal Istanbul Project. Evidently, many of the conclusions I drew from, say, the implications of the Project on the marine life in Marmara Sea, or, the potential water shortage in Istanbul were left at the hypothetical and somewhat speculative level.

The sole focus on the planning process, and the politics revolving around it, without going in much detail in its potential implementation process necessitated a focus on the disputes and debates revolving around the Project. Many argued that even just due to its huge scale of financialization, it may likely not be ever possible to implement the project but for the purposes of this thesis, I disregarded that aspect of the issue. Instead, I focused on and analyzed certain NGO reports, such as WWF report, or reports drafted by chambers that opposed the Project and government-sanctioned scientific reports such as Environmental Impact Assessment Report, which was ratified by the Ministry of Urbanization. Also, I tried to integrate some public discussions around such issues that mainly took place in various media

platforms. The difficulties of rendering a sociological analysis of an unimplemented project and the relatively narrow sample of texts analyzed here in this dissertation constitute the two main limitations of the conclusions drawn at this stage.

Yet, this thesis has also interrogated the political economic implications of the Canal Istanbul Project. The power mechanisms and struggles behind the planning process of the project have also been important issues that deserve a focus in this thesis. One of the arguments I attempted to make was a sole focus on the political economy of the Project, or how it will deepen the various forms of urban inequalities in Istanbul would not be sufficient to understand the full scale of implications of the Canal Istanbul Project. In other words, while I have tried to develop a sociology that is fully behind a political economic analysis of the Canal Istanbul Project that would reveal the ways in which it deepens existing social inequalities and produce novel ones, I argued that such analysis should be backed up by the political ecological analyses of the urban transformations that might possibly be occasioned by the implementation of the Project, if we are to understand the full extent of the Project.

Furthermore, as I have discussed, an urban political ecological analysis, a Marxist-inspired one at that, helps to identify not only the unequal power mechanisms that would impact the already existing urban inequalities in Istanbul but also how the reproduction of urban life would be hindered. Therefore, one of the important aims of this thesis has been to situate the case of the Canal Istanbul Project into the discussions revolving around the Marxist-inspired urban political ecology framework. Hopefully this helped the reader to get a grasp of the political economic problems attached to the project as well as the political ecology of Istanbul's contemporary urbanization and the problems that flow from its conundrums.

This research also aimed to show how the project would give way to various forms of problematic processes that might jeopardize the reproduction of urban life in Istanbul. The production and reproduction of urban life, recall, has been the term I used at two distinct but interrelated meanings: At the largest level of abstraction I used it to highlight the multifaceted process, whereby both labor and the capital reproduce themselves as social classes in the urban environment to enable the

contemporary capitalist urban life, which inevitably have political ecological repercussions. In this sense of the term, my analyses of the Canal Istanbul Project suggest that, should the Canal be built, the production and reproduction of urban life might be seriously jeopardized. Many scientific experts and their occupational organizations, recall, have argued that it is possible to scientifically expect a serious deterioration of marine life, not only in Black Sea and Marmara Sea but in the larger Mediterranean itself. Although it is difficult to precisely infer what its sociological consequences be, I think an argument can be made that such deterioration would seriously harm the process of urban reproduction of Istanbul and its associated classes and urbanites.

Similar conclusion can be drawn vis-a-vis the potential water shortage that might be caused by the Canal Istanbul Project—as its plan involves the annulment of two of the water reservoirs of İstanbul—would have serious negative repercussions on both laboring and the capitalist classes to reproduce themselves and hence, the urban life. As it would be absurd to think of a metropolitan area of more than 20 million inhabitants could easily produce and reproduce the urban life that sustains them, we might expect serious socio-ecological problems on that front as well.

In addition to the above meaning, I used the production and reproduction of urban life more specifically to demarcate the class-based inequalities that the process of urbanization rests on and it further reproduces. I borrowed the term from David Harvey's discussion on the right to the city," in which, he proposed that it is the working classes that rely on the use value of the city and of urban space that produce and reproduce urban life that the whole urban capitalist political economy rests. It is the labor of the working classes, he goes on, that reproduce the urban life, the value of which is often expropriated by the capitalist class, especially by capturing the exchange values produced in this process as well as extracting ground rents in the city. The production and reproduction of urban life in this second meaning clearly rests upon a class-based understanding. Again, although it is difficult to make solid suggestions, it would not be unreasonable to argue that the Project is very likely to jeopardize and hinder the production and reproduction of urban life in Istanbul, i.e., the ability of the labor to reproduce itself under the socio-ecological conditions,

distressed by the implementation of the Canal İstanbul Project. The construction of the Yenişehir, the massive urbanization of the Northern Forests towards the spatially undeveloped west suggest that we can expect an addition of a few million more inhabitants to a metropolitan area, already on the verge of housing 20 million people. Since Yenişehir and other urban development projects suggested along the Canal İstanbul Project clearly shows the purpose of attracting the very rich, especially from Qatar and the other Gulf States, we can infer that such spatial development would further spatially marginalize the working class, and to say the least, add a heavy burden to the commute based social reproduction problems that have been already there. We do not need to see a finished and polished Canal İstanbul to deduce that the working class will not occupy anywhere near the Yenişehir, with its helicopter landing spaces and marina for the extra luxurious boats of the newcomers. The working class will eventually be faced with a heavier housing and commute crises which would deteriorate their social reproduction, which would definitely have a negative effect on the production and reproduction of urban life in İstanbul.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tezin ana amacı, planlanan Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin sosyolojik analizini yapmaktır. Proje plan aşamasında olduğu için, bu tez bir mega-projenin planlanma sürecini ve bu sürecin etrafında dönen kamusal alanda gerçekleşen politik süreçleri ele almıştır. Tezin dayandığı ana noktalar, sivil organizasyonların ve meslek odalarının hazırlamış olduğu raporlar, örneğin WWF'in "Ya Kanal Ya İstanbul" adlı raporu; TMMOB Çevre Mühendisleri Odası'nın hazırlamış olduğu rapor, ve hükümet tarafından onaylanan Çevre Etki Değerlendirme Raporu gibi bilimsel raporlardır. Projenin planlanma sürecinin arkasındaki güç dinamikleri tezin değindiği önemli bir unsurdur. Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifi temel teorik çerçeve olup, kentsel mekanın yeniden üretimi bu tezin ana teması olmuştur. Ayrıca, değinilen diğer önemli unsur İstanbul'da var olan kentsel eşitsizliklerin projeden muhtemel olarak nasıl etkileneceğidir. Bu bağlamda, tezin esas ana amacı, bir vaka olarak, planlanan Kanal İstanbul Projesi'ni Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji tartışmaları içine oturtmaktır. Bir başka deyişle, İstanbul'un ve yapılıp yapılmayacağı muamma olan bir projenin politik ekolojik analizini yapmak bu tezin ana gayesidir.
Araştırmanın temel aldığı sorular, projenin inşa edilmesi durumunda İstanbul'un kentsel hayatının yeniden üretimini kısıtlayabileceği ve engelleyebileceği yolların neler olduğu; sosyolojik olarak projenin planlanma aşamasındaki politik süreçlerin ve mücadelelerin nasıl analizinin yapılabileceği; bu süreçlerde yer alan aktörlerin kimler olduğu; uzman ve meslek odalarının ve sivil organizasyonların meseleye nasıl yaklaştığı ve son olarak, planlanan bu projenin ve süreçlerinin Türkiye'nin siyasi yapılanması hakkında neleri temsil ettiği ve örneklendirdiğidir, nasıl bir pozisyonda kaldığıdır.

Tezde, kentsel hayatın yeniden üretimi iki temel bağlamda ele alınmıştır. Birinci bağlam, emeğin ve sermayenin sosyal sınıflar olarak kendilerini kapitalist kentin

talepleri doğrultusunda yeniden üretmesidir. İkinci bağlam ise, sınıf temelli eşitsizliklerin kentleşme süreçleri tarafından yeniden üretimidir. Burada, Henri Lefebvre'den ve David Harvey'den ilham alınmıştır. Kentsel hayatın yeniden üretimini sağlayan unsur emekçi sınıfın emeğidir ve kapitalist süreçler altında bu emek sömürülüp mübadele değerine indirgeniyor. Bu indirgenme süreci kentleşme sürecine içkindir. Bu argümanlar ışığında tez ilerlemiş olup, Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji tartışmalarıyla beraber projenin olası ekolojik ve sosyal etkileri, spekülasyona düşmemeye çalışarak, projenin politik süreçlerinin analizi de dahil edilerek incelenmiştir.

Projeyle ilgili daha önceki çalışmalar projenin ekonomik, siyasi, teknik, ekolojik ve jeopolitik boyutlarını ele almıştır. Bu araştırma ise projeyle ilgili Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifinden bir analiz sunmuş olup literatüre katkı sağlama umuduyla yürütülmüştür.

Kentsel politik ekolojinin temel öğretisi, kentsel sorunlar çevresel sorunlar dikkate alınmadan ele alınmamalı olduğudur. Kentler kendi başlarına birer ekoloji oluşturur. Bu durumda, kentsel politik ekolojinin ana fikri doğa ve kentler arasındaki süregelmiş ve inşa edilmiş ayrımın geçersiz olduğudur. Kenti oluşturan faktörler aslında dönüştürülmüş ve metalaştırılmış doğa ve insan emeğidir. Bir başka deyişle, teknoloji ve sermaye yatırımının verili fiziksel çevre üzerindeki etkisidir. Marksist kentsel politik ekolojinin ana gayesi ise, bu bağlamda, politik ekonomik süreçlerin analizlerinde eksik olan ekoloji tartışmaları ve ekoloji tartışmalarında eksik olan politik ekonomik analizlerin yarattığı boşluğu doldurmaktır. Ekoloji tartışmalarından kasıt, doğanın ve onun metabolik ilişkilerine gömülü olan unsurlardır. Kentsel politik ekonomik analizlerde bu faktör eksik kalmıştır. Bu tezde, bu eksikliğe kapılmamak için teorik çerçeve Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji olarak seçilmiştir; çünkü Kanal İstanbul Projesi veya diğer ve uygulanmış mega-projeler olan Yavuz Sultan Selim Köprüsü ve İstanbul Havalimanı gibi projeler birer vaka olarak etkileri düşünüldüğünde bahsi geçen iki alanı da birbirine bağlıyor. Bir başka deyişle, mega-projelerin yarattığı veya yaratacağı tahribatlar ele alınırken doğa ve toplumu beraber ve birbirine içkin oldukları gerçeğiyle analiz etmek metodolojik olarak kapsamlı bir araştırma süreci oluşturacaktır ve bu tezde de bu gaye ile çalışma konusuna yaklaşılmıştır.

Müstakbel proje sosyo-doğasal bir değişime sebep olacaktır. Uzmanlar tarafından yaratılacak olan ekolojik tahribatla bağlantılı olarak bir sürü sosyal etki yaşanması öngörülüyor. Ayrıca, bu tezde de spekülasyona düşülmeden öngörülmüş olan sosyal etkilerin, İstanbul'da halihazırda yaşanan sosyal kutuplaşma ve bunun gibi sosyal eşitsizliklerle nasıl bir kesişim içinde olacağı işlenmiştir. İstanbul'da yaşanan su ve gıda krizinden bahsedilmiş, projeden kaynaklanacak ekolojik tahribat, bu bağlamda da ele alınmıştır, özellikle proje etki alanında yer alan nüfus açısından. Proje güzergahındaki çevre mahallelerdeki etki alanında kalan nüfus, çoğunlukla Arnavutköy taraflarındaki, geçimini tarım ve hayvancılıkla sağlamaktadır. Bu nüfusun yerlerinden edilecek olması, zaten asırlardır gıdada dışa bağımlı olan İstanbul'u gıda krizi açısında çok büyük bir oranda etkilemeyecek olsa da bahsi geçen nüfusun geçim kaynakları tehlikeye girecektir. Ayrıca, Kanal İstanbul Projesi'ne entegre proje olan Yenişehir Projesi ile kente yaklaşık olarak 1,2 milyonluk bir nüfus eklenecektir. Bu durum bir sürü yeni sosyo-ekolojik sonuçlara gebe olacaktır.

Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji teorisyeni Erik Swyngedouw'a göre, sosyo-ekolojik süreçler "hibritler" olarak ele alınmalıdır. Bahsi geçen örnekler aslında Swyngedouw'un hibrit kavramını örneklendirmektedir. Teorisyene göre, hibritleşme süreçleri tahakküm yüklenmiş süreçler, yani tahakküm dinamikleriyle ilintilidir. Bu süreçler, fiziksel, biyolojik ve kimyasal süreçler olduğu gibi, kültürel de pratiklerdir. Burada, insan ve insan olmayanın birbirleriyle bağlantısı açıklanmıştır. Bu bağlamda kentler, insan ile insan olmayanın mikro-politik bir ölçekte yeniden ürettiği hibritlerdir.

Bir diğer önemli olan ve tezde bahsi geçen kavram "kentsel metabolizma" kavramıdır. Swyngedouw'un Nik Heynen ile beraber kullandığı bu kavram, kentsel sosyo-doğasal peyzajların yaratımındaki mekânsal formların ve sosyal süreçlerin ifadesinde kullanılmaktadır. Bir başka deyişle, kentsel metabolizma kavrami, kentlerin metabolik akışlardan oluştuğunu anlatır. Swyngedouw'a göre kent, bu bağlamda ele alınıp metabolik akışlar içinde analiz edilmelidir. Kent, doğanın metabolizmasını dönüştüren sosyo-çevresel bir süreçlere içkin bir olgudur. Kentleşme ise, metabolik akışların aracılığıyla meydana gelen bir süreçtir. Burada bir

diğer kavram olan, dolaşım kavramı devreye giriyor. Metabolik akışlar bir dolaşım halindedir ve kentleşmenin özünü oluştururlar.

Tezde ayrıca, kentsel politik ekolojiye ek olarak kentleşmenin politik ekonomisi planlanan projeyi teorik olarak analiz etmek için kullanılmıştır. Burada, Harvey okumaları yürütülmüş olup, mülksüzleştirme yoluyla birikim ve mekânsal çözüm kavramları ele alınmıştır. Harvey için, kentleşme doğa üzerindeki kontrol dinamikleri, birikim süreçleri, sosyal kontrol ve çatışma ile bağlantılıdır. Kapitalist toplum fiziksel bir mekan yaratmak zorundadır çünkü kapitalizmin üretim ve yeniden üretim süreci kendi mekânını gerektirir. Bu bağlamda, kenti analiz etmek için gerekli olan, mekânsal örgütlenmeden ziyade sosyal ve ekonomik sistemi kavramaktır.

Harvey'e göre kentleşme bir mekânsal ve zamansal çözümdür. Bu kavram, kapitalizmin krizleri ile ilintilidir. Aşırı birikim kapitalizm için kriz getirir ve kentleşme bu krizler için çözüm yollarından biridir. Çözümden kasıt, burada, sermayenin akışının devre değiştirmesidir. Kentleşme, üç ana akış yolundan ikincisine geçiştir. Sermaye akışı üç aşamada gerçekleşir. Birinci aşama meta üretimi, yani endüstriyel üretimdir. Burada üretim fazlası krize yol açar ve karların düşmesine sebep olur. Geçici bir çözüm olarak ise çare yatırımların sabit sermayeye kanalize edilmesidir. Sabit sermayeden kasıt fabrikalar, makinalar ve yapılı çevredir. Yapılı çevreye yapılan yatırımlar yollar, köprüler ve inşaatlar olarak örneklendirilebilir. Yatırımların bu geçişi, sermaye akışının ikinci aşamasını oluşturur. Fakat, Harvey birer savunma mekanizması olan bu geçişlerin geçici olduğunu söyler. Birikim fazlasından kaçış mümkün değildir. Bu durumda, sermaye akışı üçüncü bir aşamaya geçer. Bu da bilim ve teknolojiye yapılan yatırımlardır.
Birikim fazlasına karşı sunulan bir diğer çözüm yolu mülksüzleştirme yoluyla birikimdir. Harvey bu birikim yolunu yeni emperyalizm olarak tanımlar. Bir başka deyişle, neoliberal ve yeni bir emperyalizm türüdür. Kamu varlıklarını servetlerinden mahrum bırakarak servet ve gücün birkaç kişide merkezileşmesini içerir. Kanalın inşası ise, kanal güzergahı boyunca yaşayanların zorla yerlerinden edilmesi, yerleşik sosyal yapıların ve geçim kaynaklarının bozulması konusunda endişelere yol açmaktadır. Bu yerinden edilme, insanların evlerini ve toprakla olan bağlantılarını

kaybetmeleri nedeniyle bir mülksüzleştirme biçimi oluşturmaktadır. Ayrıca, projenin kanal koridoru boyunca arazilerin metalaştırılmasına ve özelleştirilmesine yol açması ve hükümetin ticari ve endüstriyel amaçlar için alanlar tahsis etmesi muhtemeldir. Bu süreç, Harvey'in mülksüzleştirme yoluyla birikim kavramına uygun olarak, daha önce ortak veya kamusal olan arazilerin özel mülkiyete ait varlıklara dönüştürülmesini içermektedir.

Tezde, projenin etki alanında kalan nüfusun durumu incelenmeden önce İstanbul'daki kentsel eşitsizlikler eşitsiz güç dinamikleri adı altında incelenmiştir. Burada Harvey'in mülksüzleştirme yoluyla birikim kavramı etkin olarak kullanılmıştır. Daha sonra, projenin kentsel mekânın yeniden üretimini nasıl etkileyeceğine dair kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifinden bir analiz yer almaktadır. Kentsel eşitsizlikler kısmı, İstanbul'un neoliberalizmle tanışmasını açıklayarak başlamıştır. Kenti küresel mega-kentlerle rekabet edebilir hale getirme çabaları, belediye otoritesinin güçlendirilmesi ve özel sektörle iş birliğine yönelik değişen yasal düzenlemeler, kentte neoliberal politik ekonomik değişimleri yansıtmaktadır. Kentin ilk liberalleşme süreci 1980'lerin başında Bedrettin Dalan'ın belediye başkanlığı döneminde gerçekleşmiştir. AKP'li belediyenin 2000'li yıllardaki neoliberal müdahaleleri, özellikle agresif kentsel dönüşüm ve rehabilitasyon projeleriyle birlikte, kent yoksullarının yaşam koşullarını daha da zorlaştırmıştır.

Neoliberalleşme, ayrıca, kentin konut sektöründe ciddi değişiklikler meydana gelmesine sebep olmuştur. Örneğin, Toplu Konut İdaresi TOKİ'nin Başbakanlığa bağlanması, İstanbul'daki kentsel dönüşüm projelerine yeni bir aktörün, TOKİ'nin dahil olması anlamına gelmektedir. Gecekondu dönüşüm projelerinde aktif olarak yer almıştır. TOKİ başlangıçta alt ve orta gelir grubu nüfusun konut sorununa çözüm bulmak amacıyla kurulmuştu. Ancak yasada yapılan değişikliklerle artık özel inşaat şirketleriyle iş birliği yapmaya ve kâr amacıyla konut satmaya başlamıştır. Bu durum kent yoksullarını daha da zor bir durumda bırakmıştır. Ayrıca, neoliberalleşme birlikte gayri resmi çalışma koşulları artmış olup, kent yoksullarının çoğunluğu güvencesiz çalışmaya mahkûm edilmiştir. Bir yandan böyle bir tablo görülüyorken, öte yandan kapılı topluluklar, yani siteler, olarak ultra lüks bir yaşam tarzı görülüyor. Neoliberalizm, mekânsal ayrıştırmayı daha da pekiştirmiştir.

İstanbul’un genel tablosu bu şekildeyken, planlanan projenin uygulanması halinde proje güzergahı etki alanında kalan nüfusun durumu muammadır. Etki alanındaki mahalleler Ağaçlı, Yeniköy, Karaburun, Durusu, Balaban, Tayakadın, Baklalı ve Dursunköy'dür. Bu mahallelerin genel özellikleri, ilk sakinlerinin Muhacir göçmenler olması ve Balaban hariç çok az dış göç almış olmalarıdır. Bu mahallelerin sakinleri nesillerdir muhacir kökenli olup, geçimlerini tarım ve hayvancılıktan sağlamakta ve sosyo-doğal çevrelerine sıkı sıkıya bağlı bulunmaktadırlar. Etki alanındaki topluluklar, daha kırsal ve geleneksel yaşam biçimlerine derinden bağlıdırlar. Tarım ve hayvancılıktan uzaklaşma sadece bir meslek değişikliği değil, nesillerdir süregelen geçim kaynaklarından kopuş anlamına gelmektedir. Olası yeni yerleşim yerlerinde bu faaliyetlerle uğraşamamaları, onları işsiz bırakmakta, yalnızca işlerini değil, aynı zamanda amaç duygularını ve toprakla olan bağlarını da ellerinden almaktadır. Bölge sakinleri geçim kaynaklarından daha fazlasını kaybetme tehlikesiyle karşı karşıyadır; bağımlı oldukları doğal çevreyi de kaybetme tehlikesiyle karşı karşıyadırlar.

Bu bağlamda Yenişehir Projesinin, kapsayıcılığı teşvik etmek yerine toplumsal bölünme ve kutuplaşmaları daha da derinleştirmesi muhtemeldir. Yüksek bir elit sınıfın ortaya çıkması, daha az kazanan ve başkalarına hizmet edenlerin sömürülmesiyle beslenmektedir. Arazi spekülasyonu ve emlakçıların promosyon kampanyalarıyla artan emlak değerleri, sosyal eşitsizlikleri daha da derinleştiren ayrıcalıklı, kapılı topluluklara doğru bir kaymaya işaret etmektedir. Yenişehir'de öngörülen "akıllı" şehir, kentsel kutuplaşmaya mal olmaktadır. Konutların etrafında sınırlar oluşturulması ve finans ve kültür merkezine erişimin zorlaştırılması, muhtemelen sosyal bölünmeleri pekiştirecektir. Ispartakule'nin bir tren hattına bağlanması planlanırken kent merkezinden fiziksel olarak izole edilmesi, ulaşım ve kentsel erişilebilirlik alanlarındaki eşitsizlikleri kalıcı hale getirebilir.

Bu bağlam ana argümanımı doğurmaktadır. Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin uygulanması halinde kentin sosyal ve ekolojik yaşamını büyük olasılıkla tehlikeye atacağı ve önemli bir sosyal ve ekolojik yeniden üretim sorununa yol açacağı ana argümanımın bir parçasıdır. Kentler ve sosyo-doğal ekolojik sistemler karmaşık şekillerde birbirine bağlı sistemlerdir. Swyngedouw'un da belirttiği gibi kent, sosyo-çevresel

metabolizmalar içinde bir süreçtir. Bu bağlamda, kentsel-ekolojik bağlantı doğal kaynak kullanımı, biyoçeşitlilik, hava kalitesi, enerji tüketimi ve diğer birçok faktörü içermektedir. Bu faktörler sosyo-iktidar ilişkilerinden bağımsız değildir. Başka bir deyişle, güç sadece insan aktörlerle ilgili bir kavram değildir. Gerekli olan ve kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifinin öğrettiği şey, insan/insan olmayan ikileminin ötesine bakmaktır. Kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifinde güç ilişkileri sadece insan aktörler açısından değil, insan olmayanlar açısından da analiz edilir. Güç ilişkileri insanlar arasında olduğu kadar insan olmayanlar arasında da bir aracılık süreci olarak deneyimlenir. Bu sebeple tezde, olası sosyal ve ekolojik etkiler kentsel mekanın yeniden üretimi altında beraber incelenmiştir.

Tezde ekolojik analiz iki bağlamda yürütülmüştür. Bunlardan ilki, kentsel yaşama içkin ve insanlar için hayati önem taşıyan gıda ve su gibi temel sosyal ihtiyaçlarla ilgilidir. İkinci bağlam ise kentsel mekânı ve ekolojisini değiştirecek olan projenin flora, fauna ve Türk Boğazlar Sistemi gibi insani olmayan düzeyde analizidir. Bu düzey insan dışı olarak kategorize edilse de kentsel yaşamın sosyal yeniden üretimine içkindir. İlk bağlamla bağlantılıdır çünkü ekosistem bir bütündür ve bunlar da kentsel mekânın ve kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimine içkin unsurlardır.

Tez, ileriki kısımlarda, konuyla ilgili uzmanların ve çeşitli sivil organizasyonların görüşlerine yer vererek ilerlemiştir. Kısacası uzmanlar İstanbul'un bu projeyi karşılayamayacağını ve ciddi zararlara yol açacağını söylemektedir. Ayrıca, Türkiye'nin doğa koruma bağlamında uyması gereken uluslararası düzenlemeler (örneğin Bern Antlaşması) var ve sivil organizasyonların raporlarında bu durum sık sık vurgulanarak, Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin bu düzenlemelere aykırı olacağı belirtilmektedir. Uzmanlar, Türkiye'nin bu düzenlemelerde belirtilen ekosistemlerin korunması ilkesine uyması gerektiğini söylemektedir. Ekosistemlerin bütünlüğünün korunması ve sürdürülebilirliğinin sağlanması gerekliliği güçlü bir şekilde vurgulanmaktadır.

Uzman görüşlerini tartıştıktan sonra tez, Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin Türkiye'deki hâkim siyasi iklimde tepeden inmeci yaklaşımın bir örneği olup olmadığını sorgulamaya çalışmıştır. Tepeden inmeci yaklaşım burada bir pratik olarak ele

alınmıştır. Projenin olası negatif sonuçları irdelenmiş olup, projede ısrarcı olunması tartışılmıştır. Müstakbel Kanal İstanbul Projesi, çevresel etki değerlendirmeleri, sosyal adaletsizlik ve ekonomik sonuçları içeren çok yönlü bir tartışmaya yol açmıştır. Dikkat çeken konulardan biri, Çevresel Etki Değerlendirmesi ve Sosyal Etki Değerlendirmesi raporlarının yetersizliğidir. İtiraz davalarına rağmen düzeltmeler yeterli olmamıştır. Bu raporların teknik dili, onları kapsayıcı olmaktan uzak kılmakta, halkın anlamasını ve katılımını zorlaştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, iş sağlığı ve iş güvenliği meselesi bir başka konudur ve tezde değinilmiştir. Daha önceki mega projeler ve İstanbul'da halihazırda uygulanmakta olan projelerde işçiler için kötü güvenlik koşulları bir göstergedir ve planlanan Kanal İstanbul Projesi kadar büyük ve potansiyel olarak tehlikeli bir projede emek yanlısı çalışma koşulları beklemek oldukça zordur. İnşaat faaliyetleri ne kadar büyük ve karmaşık hale gelirse ve beklenen iş cinayetleri sayısı arttıkça, iş sağlığı ve güvenliği konularının daha önemli hale gelmesi muhtemeldir.

Tez sürecinde, maddi olarak henüz ortada olmayan bir projenin sosyolojik analizini yapmak oldukça zorlayıcı oldu, çünkü niyetim Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin siyasi ekolojisinin bir analizini yapmaktı. Ayrıca, pek çok kişi projenin devasa boyuttaki finansmanı nedeniyle hayata geçirilmesinin mümkün olmayabileceğini savunsa da bu tezin amaçları doğrultusunda konunun bu yönü göz ardı edilmiştir. Bunun yerine, WWF raporu gibi bazı STK raporlarına veya Projeye karşı çıkan odalar tarafından hazırlanan raporlara ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı tarafından onaylanan Çevresel Etki Değerlendirme Raporu gibi hükümet onaylı bilimsel raporlara odaklanılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu tür konularla ilgili olarak çoğunlukla çeşitli medya platformlarında yer alan bazı kamuoyu tartışmaları da araştırma sürecine dahil edilmiştir.

Toparlamak gerekirse, uygulanmamış bir projenin sosyolojik analizini yapmanın zorlukları ve bu tezde analiz edilen metinlerin görece dar örneklemi, bu aşamada varılan sonuçların iki temel sınırlılığını oluşturmaktadır. Ancak, bu tez aynı zamanda Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin politik ekonomik sonuçlarını da sorgulamıştır. Projenin planlama sürecinin arkasındaki güç mekanizmaları ve mücadeleler de bu tezde odaklanmayı hak eden önemli konular olmuştur. Tezin temel argümanlardan biri, sadece projenin ekonomi politiğine ya da İstanbul'daki çeşitli kentsel eşitsizlik

biçimlerini nasıl derinleştireceğine odaklanmanın Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin etkilerini tam olarak anlamak için yeterli olmayacağıdır. Başka bir deyişle, Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin mevcut toplumsal eşitsizlikleri nasıl derinleştirdiğini ve yeni eşitsizlikler ürettiğini ortaya koyacak bir politik ekonomik analizin tamamen arkasında duran bir sosyoloji geliştirmeye çalışılırken, projenin tam kapsamını anlamak için, bu analizin projenin uygulanmasının yol açabileceği kentsel dönüşümlerin politik ekolojik analizleriyle desteklenmesi gerektiği savunulmuştur.

Ayrıca, bu tezdeki bir diğer ana mesele kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretiminin nasıl engelleneceğini analiz etmektir. Dolayısıyla, bu tezin önemli amaçlarından biri, Kanal İstanbul Projesi örneğini Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji çerçevesi etrafında dönen tartışmaların içine yerleştirmek olmuştur. Bu bağlamda, araştırma aynı zamanda projenin İstanbul'da kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimini tehlikeye atabilecek çeşitli sorunlu süreçlere nasıl yol açacağını göstermeyi amaçlamıştır. Kentsel yaşamın üretimi ve yeniden üretimi iki farklı ama birbiriyle ilişkili anlamda kullanılmıştır. Hem emeğin hem de sermayenin kentsel çevrede kendilerini toplumsal sınıflar olarak yeniden ürettikleri çok yönlü süreç, kentsel politik ekoloji bağlamıyla beraber vurgulanmıştır. Bu anlamda, Kanal İstanbul Projesi üzerine yapılan analizler, Kanal'ın inşa edilmesi halinde kentsel yaşamın üretiminin ve yeniden üretiminin ciddi biçimde tehlikeye girebileceğini göstermektedir.

Kentsel yaşamın yeniden üretimi için kullanılan bir diğer anlam için Harvey'in "kent hakkı" tartışmaları kullanılmıştır. Kentsel yaşamın üretimi ve yeniden üretimi daha spesifik olarak kentleşme sürecinin dayandığı ve yeniden ürettiği sınıf temelli eşitsizliklerin sınırlarını çizmek için kullanılmıştır. Harvey'e göre tüm kentsel yaşamı üreten ve yeniden üreten, kentin ve kentsel mekânın kullanım değerine dayanan işçi sınıflarıdır. Bu ikinci anlamdaki kentsel yaşamın üretimi ve yeniden üretimi açıkça sınıf temelli bir anlayışa dayanmaktadır. Tezde, somut önerilerde bulunmak zor olsa da Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin hayata geçirilmesiyle birlikte İstanbul'da kentsel yaşamın üretiminin ve yeniden üretiminin, yani emeğin sosyo-ekolojik koşullar altında kendini yeniden üretebilmesinin tehlikeye girme ve sekteye uğrama ihtimalinin çok yüksek olduğunu iddia etmek mantıksız olmayacaktır.

Yenişehir'in inşası ile, Kuzey Ormanları'nın mekânsal olarak gelişmemiş batıya doğru yoğun bir şekilde kentleşmesi, zaten 20 Milyon insanı barındıran bir metropol alanına birkaç milyon nüfusun daha eklenmesini göstermektedir. Yenişehir ve Kanal İstanbul Projesi boyunca önerilen diğer kentsel gelişim projeleri, özellikle Katar ve diğer Körfez ülkelerinden zengin bir grubu çekme amacını açıkça gösterdiğinden, bu tür bir mekânsal gelişimin işçi sınıfını mekânsal olarak daha da marjinalleştireceği ve zaten var olan ulaşım temelli toplumsal yeniden üretim sorunlarına ağır bir yük ekleyeceği sonucunu çıkarabiliriz. İşçi sınıfının, helikopter iniş alanları ve yeni gelenlerin ekstra lüks tekneleri için inşa edilecek marinasıyla Yenişehir'in yakınında bir yerde bulunmayacağı sonucunu çıkarmak için Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin yürürlüğe girmesini beklemeye gerek yoktur. Tezin en önemli bulgularından biri, kentin işçi sınıfının daha ağır bir barınma ve ulaşım kriziyle karşı karşıya kalacak olmasıdır. Bu durum, işçi sınıfının toplumsal yeniden üretimlerini olumsuz etkileyecektir ve İstanbul'da kentsel yaşamın üretimini ve yeniden üretimini kesinlikle olumsuz etkileyecektir.

Bu araştırma, Marksist bir kentsel politik ekoloji analizinden bahsi geçen bağlamları ele aldığı için literatüre katkı sağlamayı planlama umuduyla yazılmıştır. Marksist kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifi önemlidir, çünkü kentsel yaşamın üretimi ve yeniden üretimi ile bağlantılı olan sosyo-doğal değişimlerin dinamiklerini anlamak için bir rehberlik sağlar. Tekrarlamak gerekirse, kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifi, kent-doğa ikiliğinin ötesinde düşünmeyi sağlar. Bir kent kendi içinde ekolojik bir varlıktır ve bir kente dayatılan bir proje sosyo-doğasal bir değişim yaratacaktır. Dolayısıyla her ikisi birlikte düşünülmelidir. Hem Kanal İstanbul'u hem de Yeni Şehir Projesi'ni inşa etmek, İstanbul'un mekân kullanımını yeniden üretmenin devasa bir uygulamasıdır. Mekân, bağlamlara referansla üretilen ve yeniden üretilen bir kavramdır. Kentsel politik ekoloji perspektifleri bu özel durumları inceler ve kentlerde meydana gelen sosyo-doğal değişimleri analiz eder. Olası proje, sadece şehrin ortasında bir ada yaratmakla kalmayacak, aynı zamanda kentsel yaşam üzerinde ciddi bir sosyal etkiye de sahip olacaktır. Oluşturulacak yapay ada hem ekolojik hem de sosyal anlamda izolasyon anlamına gelmektedir demek yanlış olmaz.

Kanal İstanbul Projesi'nin plan ve projeksiyonlarının iktidarın dayattığı retorikle ilişkili olduğunu söylemek de yanlış olmayacaktır. İstanbul'un doğa ve kent hakkı

kalkınma ideolojisi uğruna mağdur edilmektedir. Projenin temel söylemi ülkenin zenginleşmesidir ve bu zenginleşmenin ana aktörlerinden biri ise Katar sermayesi olan yabancı sermayeyi çekmekle ilgilidir. Bu durum, siyasi yansımaları olan bir durumdur. Hükümetin söylemi tamamen "Vizyon 2023" projeksiyonu ile bağlantılıdır. Bu projeksiyon bilimsel ve teknolojik olarak gelişmiş bir Türkiye'ye atıfta bulunmaktadır. Yenişehir projesinin de yüksek teknolojiye sahip bir "akıllı" şehir olması planlanmaktadır. Günümüzün sürdürülebilir kentler modasında yeni kentlerin eko-kent modasının gerisinde kalması mümkün değildir. Akıllı eko-kentler ise, sosyo-doğasal peyzajların yeni mekânsal formlarıdır. Yenişehir projesinde de bu moda takip edilecek olup, adaletsiz güç dinamikleri pekişecektir. Akıllı eko-kentler, siyasi ve ekonomik çıkarlardan bağımsız oluşumlar değillerdir. Oysaki, kentler ve kent hakkı yaşam haklarımızla içkindir. Planlanan proje Lefebvre'nin kent hakkı kavramıyla tamamen zıt düşmektedir. Kent hakkı kavramına göre, kentte yaşayan herkesin kent üzerinde hakkı vardır ve kenti değiştirecek, şekillendirecek herkesin kent üzerinde hakkı vardır. Şehir bir oyun ve keyif alanıdır, ancak İstanbul örneğinde şehir, altyapı eksikliği, aşırı nüfus, sert neoliberal sınıf çatışmaları ve yukarıda bahsedilen kutuplaşma nedeniyle bunun bir örneği olmaktan uzaktır demek yanlış olmaz.

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